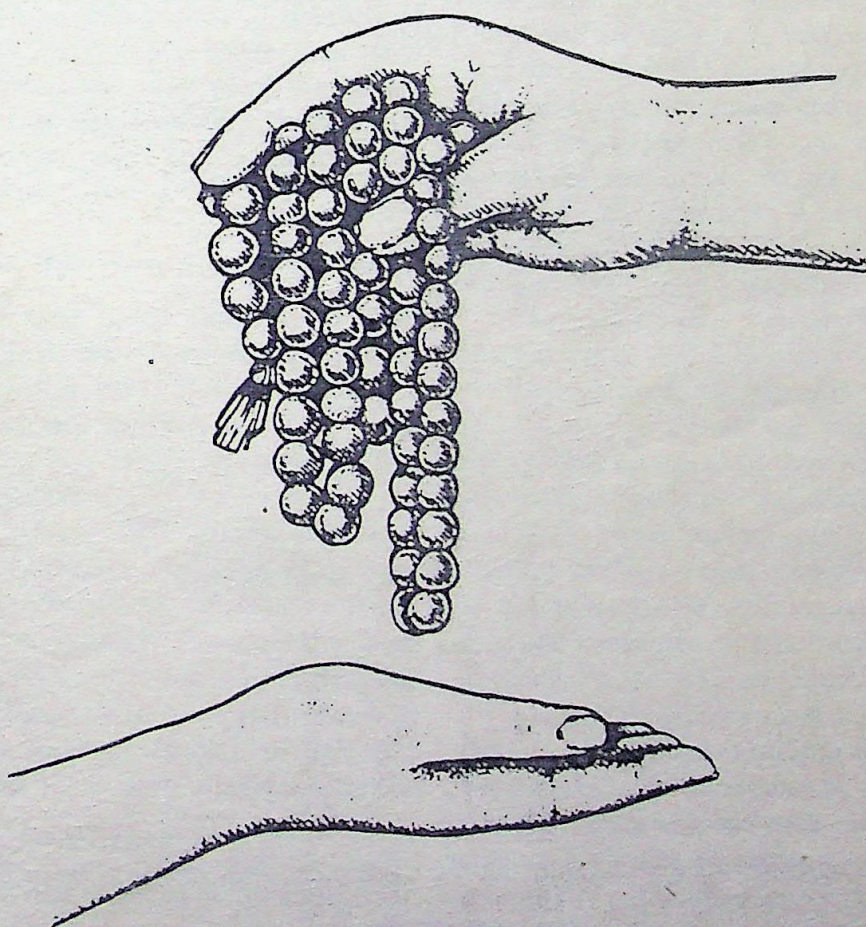


GURUS AND INITIATION IN ISKCON



Law of the International Society for Krishna
Consciousness

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GURUS AND INITIATION IN ISKCON

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this Work

This paper is intended to give members of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness an accurate and up-to-date text of ISKCON's laws governing gurus and initiation. Accordingly, it is meant to get into the hands of every ISKCON devotee, whether temple resident or congregational member. In the past, ISKCON's laws—that is, the resolutions of the Governing Body Commission, or GBC—have rarely been communicated well to the rest of the Society. The present work is part of an effort to correct that shortcoming; thus if this paper goes no further than temple presidents' file drawers, we shall have failed.

We shall have succeeded when all members of ISKCON have the opportunity to clearly understand the policies and principles under which the Society operates. This is essential if we want to offer Śrīla Prabhupāda an organization that is unified, well ordered, and effective.

Why and How this Work Was Produced

The work in hand is the product of a GBC subcommittee called the "Resolutions Revision Committee," formed in 1987. The GBC instructed the committee to codify the laws of ISKCON and disseminate the text to all ISKCON members. This effort was sorely needed.

Beginning in 1975, the GBC had met annually in Mayapur. At these meetings they followed the rules of parliamentary procedure, duly bringing proposals to the floor, debating and sometimes amending them, and finally voting on them. It was Śrīla Prabhupāda himself who established this system, and to teach by example, he personally participated in the 1975 meeting, raising his hand along with the others to vote "yea" or "nay."

Proposals the GBC thus passed, called "resolutions," were then recorded by the secretary in a minutes book kept in Mayapur. The GBC would mail copies of each year's resolutions to the temple presidents. However, the other members of the Society rarely saw these resolutions, and those who did often found them hard to understand. In the first place, the resolutions were set forth in the order they were adopted. This procedure often obscured the

logic behind them and caused enduring statements of law or principle to be haphazardly scrambled in with legislation dealing with such nuts-and-bolts management issues as zonal assignments, permission to move installed Deities, and sannyāsa approval.

Even worse, since a resolution rarely described the issue or problem that had prompted it or the often complex discussion that had preceded its adoption, its true import was frequently opaque to all but insiders.

In such circumstances, after only a few years resolutions often became distorted in memory, misunderstood, or forgotten entirely. Moreover, the GBC would occasionally pass resolutions that contradicted previous ones. This was sometimes intentional and sometimes inadvertent, but in either case the GBC would usually neglect to rescind the old resolutions. Sometimes changing circumstances would render past resolutions irrelevant or even absurd, and they simply fell into disuse without ever being formally retired. As a result of this lack of organization, the Society — even the GBC itself — was unsure of its own laws.

The Resolutions Revision Committee was charged with rectifying this state of affairs.

First the committee members secured a complete and accurate copy of the original hand-written record. Then we separated those relatively permanent statements of principle and practice ("laws") from those resolutions having only temporary or local application ("provisional orders"). (When one of the latter was found to contain an implied—but unstated law, the committee would extract it and state it explicitly.) In this way, we identified the laws.

Next, we organized them coherently within an outline. At that point it became obvious which ones were contradictory or redundant. After resolving the contradictions and eliminating the redundancies, the committee worked to clarify those resolutions that remained vague, ambiguous, or simply unintelligible. This often meant consulting GBC members who were present when such resolutions were passed; only in this way could we determine the intention of the GBC at that time. Additionally, the committee occasionally drafted new proposals to fill glaring gaps in the outline. Finally, we had the completed section edited for clear and concise English.

In February 1995 the committee submitted to the GBC body for final approval of the section on gurus and initiations in ISKCON. Each GBC member received a document displaying all proposed changes, and then had a chance to offer amendments. Finally the GBC voted on the work as a whole. The revised laws on gurus and initiation were accepted by the GBC body, and it is this document which presents that accepted work. A few new proposals in this area that the GBC passed in 1995 have also been incorporated into this outline.

Three GBC members have continuously served on the committee from the beginning. They are Jayapataka Swami, Kavicandra Swami, and Ravindra Svarupa dasa. Guru Gauranga Prabhu, Danavir Prabhu, and Bhaktarupa Prabhu have also worked on the committee at various times, making important contributions to this paper.

In 1991 the GBC body assigned the Resolutions Revision Committee an additional task, which is revealed by its new name: "Resolutions Revision and Constitution Committee." In other words, the overarching purpose of this committee is to see the day when every ISKCON member has a handbook called "Constitution and Laws of ISKCON." Toward this end, in 1993, the Committee completed its work on the laws governing properties and real estate and had it adopted by the GBC body, and in 1995, we completed this work on gurus and initiation.

Two Procedures Summarized

The laws below contain two procedures that will likely concern ISKCON devotees the most; one is how a devotee becomes authorized to give initiation, and the other is how a devotee becomes authorized to receive initiation. We shall summarize both procedures here.

How A Devotee Becomes Authorized to Give Initiation

The process by which a devotee becomes authorized to give initiation in ISKCON is carried out chiefly on a local level. At one time the GBC body had reserved to itself the entire sanctioning process. Eventually, however, the GBC delegated the bulk of the nominating and evaluating procedure to local senior devotees, on the grounds that they would be far more familiar with the candidate's history and

character than the GBC, and hence better able to judge his or her qualifications.

ISKCON law specifies certain criteria that a prospective guru must meet, including various spiritual qualifications and standards of conduct. When evaluating a candidate for initiating guru, a specially formed local council must take all these into consideration, together with Śrīla Prabhupāda's relevant instructions. The council, convened by the local GBC secretary, should be composed of senior devotees drawn from the candidate's preaching area. It must include all the GBC zonal secretaries for that area and at least ten other members, among them all regional secretaries, temple presidents, and resident sannyasis.

If a majority of that council approves the candidate, then the council must send the GBC secretary a nominating letter describing the candidate's qualifications and history in ISKCON. That letter then goes to all GBC members, who have six months to raise any objections. If at least three GBC members do so, the nomination is tabled until the GBC can discuss it at its next annual meeting. If fewer than three GBCs object, or if enough initial letters of objection are withdrawn, the candidate, after taking the prescribed vows, becomes authorized as an initiating guru in ISKCON.

How a Devotee Becomes Authorized to Receive First Initiation

There are two stages in the process by which a devotee becomes authorized to receive first initiation. In the first, a bhakta or bhaktin undergoes training in preparation for taking shelter of a guru. In the second, he or she formally takes shelter of a specific guru and prepares for actual initiation.

During the first stage, the candidate should develop the knowledge and purity required to sincerely and seriously take shelter of some advanced devotee authorized to initiate in ISKCON.

ISKCON law specifies two requirements a candidate must fulfill before receiving authorization to formally take shelter of a particular spiritual master. First, whether the candidate lives inside or outside a temple, for at least six-months he or she must have strictly followed the four regulative principles, chanted sixteen rounds a day, and attended a morning program daily. Second, the candidate must pass an examination in the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

These two requirements help ensure that the neophyte devotee is qualified to make a responsible choice and commitment. It is important to note that a candidate's qualification to formally take shelter of a particular spiritual master—and, later, to receive initiation from him—must be confirmed by an appropriate ISKCON authority *other than* the initiating guru himself. A guru cannot give initiation simply at his own discretion. Rather, he must receive written recommendation from the local temple president or other authority.

ISKCON law recognizes two ways in which a devotee comes to take shelter of an initiating guru.

In some cases, a person will move into a temple and take up the strict process of sādhanā without having had much association with devotees. For at least six months that person should simply chant Śrīla Prabhupāda's pranāma mantra and consider Śrīla Prabhupāda as his or her śikṣā guru. Then, after passing the examination, the bhakta or bhaktin may choose to take shelter of a particular initiating guru and chant that guru's pranāma mantra. The candidate must inform his or her authority of the choice and be accepted as an aspiring disciple by the guru.

In other cases, a person may spend a long time in a temple congregation or devotee community before becoming qualified to formally take shelter of an initiating guru. Such a devotee may naturally develop a faithful relationship with a particular ISKCON guru. In these cases, if one has been a

member of a congregation or community for at least a year, he or she may approach a guru and be accepted as an aspirant for future shelter and initiation. Again, the appropriate authority must sanction that relationship.

In any event, six months of strict following and the passing of an examination are required before one can formally take shelter of a prospective initiating guru and, in turn, be formally accepted by that guru as a prospective disciple. The second stage preliminary to actual initiation, in which one has formally taken shelter of one's prospective guru, allows time for both parties to test the relationship and develop confidence in each other's qualifications. At least six months of continuous strict following in relationship with the prospective spiritual master must pass before the candidate may obtain formal written authorization to receive initiation. A candidate who has formally taken shelter of a particular spiritual master is free to change his mind at any time before initiation.

In sum, before receiving first initiation one must strictly follow the principles of sādhanā-bhakti for at least one year.

Each member of ISKCON has a right to accept dīkṣā from a guru of his or her choice. Similarly, the initiating spiritual master is free to accept or reject anyone as a disciple. A spiritual master is not obliged to initiate a devotee simply because a proper recommendation has been given.

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GURUS AND INITIATION: LAWS OF ISKCON

1. GURUS IN ISKCON

1.1. Śrīla Prabhupāda's Desire for Continuing the Disciplic Succession

The GBC approves of the paper entitled "'On My Order' Understood" which establishes as ISKCON law the final siddhānta on Śrīla Prabhupāda's desire for continuing the disciplic succession after the departure of His Divine Grace. [See Part II: GBC Position Papers in this volume]

1.2. Qualifications of Gurus in ISKCON

1.2.1. Mandatory Qualifications

The following are the minimum qualifications necessary to be approved as a dīksā or śikṣā guru in ISKCON.

1.2.1.1. Initiated for ten years

Must have been an initiated disciple for at least ten years.

1.2.1.2. Strict follower of vows

Must be strictly following the four regulative principles, regularly attending the morning program, and chanting sixteen rounds daily.

1.2.1.3. No history of fall-down

Must not have had a fall-down within five years.

1.2.1.4. No tendency toward moral turpitude

Must evince no tendency toward moral turpitude in his present or past activities.

1.2.1.5. Free from six undesirable qualities

Must be free from the following undesirable qualities:

- attachment to *kāminī-kāñcana*, "the devil" in the form of sex objects and wealth;
- pratiṣṭha*, false prestige and personal ambition;
- nisiddhācāra*, behavior contrary to vaiṣṇava principles;
- kuṭi-nāṭi*, diplomatic or duplicitious behavior;
- pūjā*, the desire for personal worship;
- lābha*, mundane profiteering.

1.2.1.6. Excels in preaching

Must have excelled in preaching activities.

1.2.1.7. Proficient in scripture

Must exhibit proficiency in knowledge and understanding of śāstra.

1.2.1.8. Adheres rigidly to paramparā

Must preach without concoction and strictly according to the paramparā, with śāstric knowledge grounded firmly in siddhānta, or conclusive truth.

1.2.1.9. Effective guide and counsellor

Must be effective in practical preaching and counselling.

1.2.1.10. Faithful to Prabhupāda without compromise

Must have no loyalties that compete with or compromise his loyalty to Śrīla Prabhupāda, to his teachings, and to ISKCON.

1.2.1.11. Dedicated to Prabhupāda's mission

Must show understanding of, and dedication, to Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission, with a strong commitment to maintaining and increasing book distribution and other ISKCON projects.

1.2.1.12. Follows and upholds the GBC

Must recognize the GBC as the ultimate managing authority in ISKCON, support the GBC system, and follow the GBC.

1.2.1.13. Engaged full-time in ISKCON

Should be engaged full-time in devotional service in an ISKCON center or other ISKCON-approved preaching program.

1.2.2. Discretionary Qualifications

These qualifications should be applied when appropriate and as far as possible.

1.2.2.1. Holds ISKCON advanced degree

Should hold a Bhaktivedānta or Bhaktivaibhava degree.

1.2.2.2. Inspires faith in ability to follow codes for gurus

Should be nothing in his character, conduct, or circumstances to give rise to doubt about his ability to follow the code of conduct for gurus. [See §1.5.2 below]

1.2.2.3. Not entangled in abnormal situations

Should not be involved in any abnormal personal situation. An example of such a situation would be a disrupted or anomalous family life which could distract a guru from his guru duties or otherwise prove a disturbance to him or his followers.

1.2.2.4. Shows rectitude in ordinary dealings

Should always be responsible, conscientious, and honorable in ordinary dealings.

1.3. Eligibility of Devotee to Be Guru in ISKCON

1.3.1. All Devotee's Initiations From ISKCON Gurus

No devotee shall be eligible to become a dīkṣā and/or śikṣā guru in ISKCON unless he has received all of his initiations from ISKCON-approved gurus in good standing. A devotee initiated by a bona fide Gaudīya Vaisnava guru before joining ISKCON may be considered as a special case by the GBC body.

1.3.2. No One Can Give Dīkṣā While Guru is Present

No devotee shall give initiation as long as his own spiritual master is present on the planet. A devotee whose spiritual master is present must take all who approach him for initiation to his own spiritual master (or other approved initiating guru). [See Part II: GBC Position Papers in this volume]

1.3.3. Requirement for Consent of Mantra Guru

Devotees who have received first initiation from Śrīla Prabhupāda and second initiation from one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples must, with the written consent of the mantra guru, be accepted as candidates for initiating spiritual master like any of Śrīla Prabhupāda's other disciples.

1.4. Procedure for Authorizing Dīkṣā and Śikṣā Gurus

A devotee may serve as dīkṣā and/or śikṣā guru in ISKCON after completing the following authorization procedure:

1.4.1. Endorsement By an Area Council

A candidate for guru in ISKCON must first receive a majority vote of approval in a council composed of all the GBC zonal secretaries of his current preaching area and at least ten other senior devotees residing in the candidate's area of activity. The council will be organized and convened by the GBC secretary(s).

1.4.1.1. Composition of council

The council must include all regional secretaries, temple presidents, and resident sannyāsis in the candidate's current preaching area. In addition to the ten (or more) local area members, spiritual authorities and senior devotees in good standing from neighboring areas may also be included in the council.

1.4.1.2. Principles of evaluation

The council shall evaluate the candidate according to the qualifications for guru given by Śrīla Prabhupāda in his oral and written teachings, and by the GBC body in its standards and guidelines. [See §1.2. above and §1.5.2. below]

1.4.1.3. Council integrity maintained

Once the council has been formed to evaluate a particular candidate, it cannot be reconstituted except to replace a member who has left his position as a local ISKCON manager, or who has resigned from the council, or who has become spiritually unfit.

1.4.2. Provision for "No Objection" Letters

If the candidate has resided for less than five years in the area making the nomination, the recommending council shall obtain "no objection" letters from the GBC and temple president(s) of the other area(s) the candidate resided in during the five years previous to his recommendation.

1.4.3. Names Sent to All GBC Members

1.4.3.1. Letter of nomination to GBC corresponding secretary

The chairman of the area council shall send a letter of nomination for the guru candidate endorsed by the council to the GBC corresponding secretary. The letter of endorsement must include the following items:

1. A thorough description of the qualifications of the candidate, showing point by point how he conforms to the GBC standards and guidelines for guru. [See § 1.2 above]
2. A complete history of the devotional service of the candidate, including the dates and places of his engagements.
3. A list of the names of the members of the nominating council, giving for each member the service, the seniority, his vote, and a explanation for his vote.

1.4.3.2. Corresponding secretary verifies and distributes

After verifying that the candidate had been properly endorsed, the corresponding secretary shall send the candidate's name to all members of the GBC.

1.4.4. Three GBC Objections Veto Candidate

Any member of the GBC who has a misgiving concerning the suitability of a candidate, or who would prefer the matter to be discussed and decided by the GBC body, has six months from his date of notification to file a written statement of non-approval with the GBC corresponding secretary. If the corresponding secretary receives at least three letters of non-approval, the candidate shall not take up the role of guru, and his candidacy shall be considered by the GBC body at its next annual general meeting.

1.4.5. Completion of Authorizing Procedure

1.4.5.1. Absence of three letters of non-approval

If the GBC corresponding secretary has not received at least three letters of non-approval by the end of the six-month period, the GBC corresponding secretary shall so inform the chairman of the recommending council, upon which the candidate, after taking the prescribed vows, shall be authorized to be a guru in ISKCON and perform the duties thereof.

1.4.5.2. Presence of three letters of non-approval

If the corresponding secretary has received at least three letters of non-approval within the six-month period, but subsequently sufficient GBC members withdrew their objections to lower the number of objectors to fewer than three, the secretary shall so inform the chairman of the recommending council, upon which the candidate, after taking the prescribed vows, shall be authorized to be a guru in ISKCON and perform the duties thereof.

1.4.6. Corresponding Secretary Monitors and Informs

The corresponding secretary shall monitor this procedure and keep all the concerned parties informed as needed.

1.5. Regulations

1.5.1. Vows of Guru

A devotee authorized to act as a guru in ISKCON must publicly take the following vows in a ceremony before Śrīla Prabhupāda's vyāsāsana. A signed copy of the vows must be filed with the GBC corresponding secretary:

1. My personal mission as guru in ISKCON shall be the same as the mission of Śrīla Prabhupāda: to flood the world with transcendental literature like *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and, as Śrīla Prabhupāda said, to "do as I am doing" in establishing ISKCON all over the world.
2. I recognize the GBC as the ultimate managing authority in ISKCON. I support the GBC system and will follow the GBC as Śrīla Prabhupāda desired.
3. I recognize that a bona fide guru is first of all a bona fide disciple, and that in all my actions I shall remain surrendered to Śrīla Prabhupāda's orders and the orders of his authorized representatives.
4. As Śrīla Prabhupāda ordered his followers to serve within ISKCON under the GBC, I acknowledge that for me to represent Śrīla Prabhupāda in my service as a guru in paramparā "under his order," I can do so only as a member of ISKCON. If I leave ISKCON I shall no longer act as guru.
5. As a spiritual master, I shall always set a Kṛṣṇa-conscious standard for all devotees by my behavior, which shall be strictly regulated and exemplary at all times. As a public representative of ISKCON, I must always conform with ISKCON policies and never act in any way to weaken or jeopardize ISKCON's world-wide mission. I shall not act in a way to diminish any person's faith in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
6. I shall scrupulously study and review all aspiring disciples, and grant initiation only to qualified devotees so as to preserve the seriousness and sanctity of initiation. I shall only accept as disciples candidates who are qualified according to the standards and procedures established by ISKCON law. [See §2 below]
7. I shall give my disciples directions and examples in strict conformity with those of Śrīla Prabhupāda. I shall teach all my disciples that they are part of ISKCON.

1.5.2. Standards of Conduct for Gurus in ISKCON

1.5.2.1. General Standards

- 1.5.2.1.1. Must always set the highest example for all devotees.
- 1.5.2.1.2. Must guide his disciples to follow Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions.
- 1.5.2.1.3. Must protect and nourish the faith of all ISKCON devotees in their guru, in Śrīla Prabhupāda, and in Śrī Kṛṣṇa.
- 1.5.2.1.4. Must encourage newcomers' faith in ISKCON and protect the faith of existing members.
- 1.5.2.1.5. Must not give initiation until the approval process [see §1.4 above] has been fully completed.
- 1.5.2.1.6. Must not canvass for disciples.
- 1.5.2.1.7. Must allow all uninitiated devotees full freedom to exercise their right to accept initiation from the guru of their choice.
- 1.5.2.1.8. Must allow uninitiated devotees who have preliminarily taken shelter of him the full freedom to change their minds on their choice of initiating guru.
- 1.5.2.1.9. Since the guru-dakṣiṇā received by an ISKCON guru is the property of ISKCON, it must be used for the benefit of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. All guru-dakṣiṇā must be kept in a special account, preferably an ISKCON account, with at least two signatures, and accurate account records must be kept.

1.5.2.2. Standards in relation to the GBC body

- 1.5.2.2.1. Must respect the Governing Body Commission as Śrīla Prabhupāda's chosen successor as the ultimate managing authority of ISKCON and maintain a respectful serving attitude towards the GBC.
- 1.5.2.2.2. As a guru in paramparā from Śrīla Prabhupāda, he must follow Śrīla Prabhupāda in order to work in ISKCON. Therefore, he must accept the GBC body as his authority and follow the directives of the GBC.

- 1.5.2.2.3. Must submit to any disciplinary sanctions imposed by the GBC body [see §1.5.4 below], including not initiating new disciples.

1.5.2.3. Standards in relation to GBC zonal secretaries

- 1.5.2.3.1. Must act under the supervision of and in coordination with GBC zonal secretaries.
- 1.5.2.3.2. Must not change his residence without consulting the local GBC zonal secretary beforehand, since such a move may affect the temples and devotees.
- 1.5.2.3.3. Must disclose financial records to the GBC zonal secretary if the need arises.

1.5.2.4. Standards in relation to ISKCON spiritual authorities

"ISKCON spiritual authority" refers to temple presidents, regional secretaries, local GBC zonal secretaries, and those of similar stature.

- 1.5.2.4.1. Must be accountable to the local ISKCON authorities for his actions.
- 1.5.2.4.2. Must cooperate with local ISKCON authorities.
- 1.5.2.4.3. Must not initiate any devotee who has not received proper recommendation from the appropriate ISKCON spiritual authority. [See §2.3.3 below]
- 1.5.2.4.4. Must instruct disciples and other devotees to cooperate with ISKCON authorities.
- 1.5.2.4.5. Must avoid confrontation with ISKCON authorities and settle any misunderstandings amicably.
- 1.5.2.4.6. Must not undermine ISKCON authorities in any way.
- 1.5.2.4.7. Must not direct disciples to make changes in service or āśrama without first securing the consent of the disciple's local authority.
- 1.5.2.4.8. Must act according to his position of service in ISKCON and not merely his position as guru.

1.5.2.5. Standards in relation to a temple

- 1.5.2.5.1. Must work and preach for the interest of the temple.
- 1.5.2.5.2. Must coordinate any ceremonies or special programs with the temple schedule.
- 1.5.2.5.3. Must surrender the engagement in devotional service of his disciples who live in an ISKCON temple to the temple management.
- 1.5.2.5.4. Must not transfer disciples from a temple without permission of the temple president. A guru may, however, request a disciple to leave a particular temple, without obtaining the president's consent, when the guru considers it a matter of "spiritual life and death" for the disciple, as for example, being regularly exposed to direct blasphemy of his guru, or being unable to follow the four regulative principles. In this case the guru must consult with the local GBC zonal secretary.

1.5.3. Monitoring of Gurus by the GBC

1.5.3.1. Annual reports

Each GBC member must submit a form annually to the Executive Committee indicating briefly the status of all approved ISKCON gurus normally residing, regularly preaching, or initiating in his zone. (The Executive Committee will assign a GBC member(s) for monitoring each guru.)

1.5.3.2. Emergency reports

If any approved guru has: a) taken reinitiation/shelter of a non-ISKCON guru or institution; b) rejected ISKCON or Śrīla Prabhupāda; or c) undergone a change of service, of āśrama, or of living situation, which the local GBC member feels threatens to hamper the approved guru's ability to give guidance to or set a proper standard of conduct for disciples, then the GBC member shall submit an emergency report to the Executive Committee. If possible, this report shall include a written statement from the guru in question as to his intentions in regard to his disciples and his devotional service.

If not possible, then the report shall at least include a description of the approved guru's intentions as best they can be discerned through the investigation of the GBC member.

The report shall also contain any other information which would be of value to the GBC Body in determining the guru's status, as well as the recommendations of the local temple presidents, zonal councils, etc.

The Executive Committee shall review the emergency reports and take any necessary action.

1.5.4. Sanctioning of Gurus by the GBC

The GBC body may apply any of the following sanctions against a guru for misconduct.

1.5.4.1. Warning (or censure)

If a guru is found deviating from or neglecting spiritual practices, but the deviation or negligence is not very severe or habitual, or if a guru is transgressing the approved standards and guidelines for guru behavior (such as canvassing for disciples, etc.) the guru should be warned (or censured) confidentially.

1.5.4.2. Probation

If the warnings are not heeded, or if the deviation or neglect of spiritual practices are of a more serious nature, or if the transgressions of guru codes of behavior are serious and habitual, the guru may be put under probation with specific conditions which regulate his guru functions (including temporary withdrawal of authorization to initiate new disciples). In addition he may be given general recommendations or specific activities to perform as part of a program for his rectification and eventual reinstatement.

1.5.4.3. Suspension

If a guru blatantly ignores the terms of probation, or repeatedly breaks one or more of the regulative principles, or acts in a manner which seriously and harmfully disregards existing ISKCON or GBC policies, or leaves his āśrama of saṁnyāsa without authorization, or leaves the association of devotees and the ISKCON movement, or completely deviates from standard sādhana, he may be suspended. If a guru is suspended he cannot give initiation, nor maintain an absolute śikṣā position in relation with his disciples, nor be introduced as a spiritual master, nor perform his guru functions such as receiving guru-pūjā or the acceptance of dāksinā.

1.5.4.4. Removal

If a guru becomes openly inimical to Śrīla Prabhupāda or ISKCON; or otherwise acts demonically; or becomes an impersonalist (māyāvādī); or preaches the unauthorized philosophy of apasampradāya groups against Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu's principles; or blatantly and consistently defies ISKCON and GBC policies; or if a guru's attachment to sense gratification is serious, prolonged, or hopeless, then, as per sāstric injunction, he shall be removed from his position as dīkṣā or śikṣā guru.

1.5.5. Renunciation of Guru Responsibilities

If a guru becomes hopelessly entangled in sense gratification or material attachments and is unable to function or continue acting as spiritual master for his disciples, he may renounce his position by giving written notice to the GBC with a request for the GBC to give direction to his disciples for their further advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

If a guru feels for other reasons that he is unable to function or continue acting as a spiritual master for his disciples, he should submit his case to the GBC body to receive direction for himself and his disciples.

1.5.6. Specifically Outlawed Doctrines and Practices

1.5.6.1. "Zonal-Ācārya" System:

No guru should declare himself or allow himself to be declared an "ācārya" or "present ācārya" for ISKCON or for a geographical area of ISKCON. There should be no use of the word "ācārya" as a title of office.

1.5.6.2. "Posthumous Rtvik" Doctrine

The doctrine that Śrīla Prabhupāda continues to initiate direct dīksā disciples after his departure from this world through officiating priests (rtviks) is a dangerous philosophical deviation. It is totally prohibited in ISKCON. No devotee shall participate in such posthumous rtvik initiation ceremonies in any capacity including acting as rtvik, initiate, assistant, organizer, or financier. No ISKCON devotee shall advocate or support its practice.

1.6 Worship and Etiquette

1.6.1. Rights of ISKCON Members to Worship Guru

As it is enjoined in scripture that a devotee must honor his spiritual master as much as he honors the Lord, every devotee in ISKCON accordingly has the right to worship, glorify, and serve his guru. So long as the guru is in good standing, no ISKCON leader shall curtail or abrogate that right. Temple presidents must provide devotees the necessary time and facility for them to worship their gurus. The disciples, however, must carry out their devotions to guru in harmony with the orderly running of temple affairs and without imposing their own guru-sevā upon disciples of other gurus.

1.6.2. Ceremonies

1.6.2.1. Guru-pūjā

The disciples of ISKCON gurus other than Śrīla Prabhupāda may offer guru-pūjā to their gurus outside the temple room. The temple should provide facility for these disciples' worship.

1.6.2.2. Vyāsa-pūjā

Vyāsa-pūjā for ISKCON gurus other than Śrīla Prabhupāda should only be observed on one day a year coinciding with the birthday of the guru. This celebration may be held in the temple room.

1.6.3. Restricted Titles

A guru cannot not use or allow his disciples to apply to him the honorific title "His Divine Grace" or the honorifics ending in "-pāda" in written public documents or in open public forum. However, such titles may be used in communications among disciples or from disciples to their guru.

1.6.4. Photograph On Altar

A pūjārī who is not initiated by Śrīla Prabhupāda shall keep the picture of his guru on the altar while offering āraṭi. The picture must be substantially smaller than those of the predecessor ācāryas in disciplic succession, or, if not substantially smaller, be placed on a lower level. After the āraṭi, the picture should be removed from the altar.

1.6.5. Seat in Temple Room

There should be one seat reserved for ISKCON gurus and their Godbrothers/sisters for giving sāstra classes in the temple room. Disciples of ISKCON gurus should sit on a lower āsana or cushion, since it is improper to sit on the same āsana used by one's dīksā guru.

1.6.6. Guru Under Suspension

1.6.6.1. No public worship

There should be no public worship of a guru who is under suspension by the GBC.

1.6.6.2. Disciples offering āraṭi

While performing āraṭi to the Deities a disciple of a suspended guru should offer the various articles through Śrīla Prabhupāda to the disciplic succession.

1.6.6.3. Disciples offering bhoga

When offering bhoga to the Deities in the temple or outside the temple in ISKCON establishments like restaurants, a disciple of a suspended guru must offer through Śrīla Prabhupāda to the disciplic succession.

1.6.6.4. Disciples offering obeisances

While offering obeisances in a public place a disciple of a suspended guru should recite Śrīla Prabhupāda's pranāma mantra aloud and should chant the mantras to the suspended guru silently or not at all.

1.7. REJECTION OF A FALLEN "GURU"

N.B.: The following laws are based on *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Bhajana-mṛta* by Śrī Narahari Sarkāra (an associate of Śrī Caitanya), *Bhakti Sandharbha* by Śrīla Jīvā Gosvāmī, and *Jaiva Dharma* by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura, in addition to the writings of Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

1.7.1. When a Fallen Guru May Be Rejected

If it is ascertained either by the admission of the guru, or by the testimony of irrefutably reliable witness(es) that the guru was fallen at the time of initiation, then the disciple has a legitimate reason to reject him and take re-initiation from a bona fide spiritual master

1.7.2. When a Fallen Guru Must Be Rejected

1.7.2.1. Hopelessly entangled in sense gratification

If a guru has become hopelessly entangled in sense gratification, and it has been established by reliable testimony or by his own admissions that he has been regularly violating the regulative principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and if there is virtually no hope for his rectification, then the disciple should reject him and may accept re-initiation.

1.7.2.2. Takes on demonic qualities

If the spiritual master takes on demoniac qualities and becomes inimical to ISKCON, he should be rejected and the disciple may take re-initiation.

1.7.3. When Not to Reject a Fallen Guru

If a guru is engaged in sense gratification, violating one or more of the regulative principles, but there is hope that he can be rectified, then his disciples should not reject him but should allow time for such rectification to take place, and they should take shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda and senior vaiṣṇavas as śikṣā gurus.

1.7.4. When a Suspended Guru May Be Rejected

A disciple of a suspended guru who has severely lost his faith in his spiritual master, or who has developed an offensive mentality towards him, and who is unable to regain his faith, even after hearing many instructions in the matter, may take permission from the spiritual master for release to accept a different initiating guru. The devotee should act in consultation with his local GBC representative. If the suspended guru withholds his permission, then the disciple may seek permission from the GBC body.

1.7.5. "Guru Āśrāya" for Guidance

Devotees whose initiating spiritual master has fallen down should take guidance from the GBC papers entitled "Guru Āśrāya" and "Questions and Answers About Reinitiation." These papers also present ISKCON's guidelines on the importance of taking shelter of a spiritual master and the role of śikṣā guru. [See Part II: GBC Position Papers in this volume]

2. INITIATION (DĪKSĀ)

2.1. Right of Devotees to Choose Guru

2.1.1. Right to Accept Instruction and Initiation

All members of ISKCON have the right to accept dīksā or śikṣā from the guru of their choice, provided that the guru is qualified and approved to initiate, the candidate is eligible to accept initiation, and that all the relevant procedures set forth in ISKCON laws have been strictly observed.

2.1.2. Right to Take Association From Any Approved Guru

Any uninitiated devotee in ISKCON has the right to read the publications, hear the recorded talks and bhajans, take darśana of, correspond with, or associate in other various feasible ways with any authorized ISKCON guru.

2.1.3. Right to Become an "Aspirant for Shelter and Initiation"

- 2.1.3.1. Someone who has been connected with the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement for more than one year, either as a congregational member or as a mature child brought up in a Kṛṣṇa-conscious devotee's household, shall be allowed to accept an ISKCON guru as a śikṣā guru and be accepted by that guru as an aspirant for shelter and initiation in the future, provided the temple president or gurukula principal (for gurukula students) gives his approval, and, in the case of a minor child, a parent gives approval.
- 2.1.3.2. Someone who has accepted an ISKCON guru as śikṣā guru and is an "aspirant for shelter and initiation" may cultivate a personal spiritual relationship with the spiritual master and, by taking personal guidance, try to progress further in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
- 2.1.3.3. Someone who has accepted an ISKCON guru as śikṣā-guru and is an "aspirant for shelter and initiation" and who wants to subsequently accept another ISKCON guru as śikṣā guru, etc., should inform both gurus and follow the procedure as provided for in §2.1.3.1 above

2.2. Responsibility of Candidate for Initiation

It is the personal responsibility of candidates for initiation to correctly decide, by the exercise of their own intelligence, to surrender to a particular devotee as spiritual master. Candidates for initiation should accept initiation from a spiritual master only after developing firm and mature faith in that devotee and in his ability to take them back to Godhead. Sādhū, śāstra, and guru are the authoritative references to apply in ascertaining the level of advancement of a devotee.

Receiving official ISKCON guru approval signifies that the devotee has successfully completed the authorization process set forth in ISKCON law, and that in the judgment of certain senior devotees the candidate measures up to the standards and guidelines given in ISKCON law. However, such approval is not automatically to be taken as a statement about the degree of God-realization of the approved guru, and it is not intended to replace the intelligent discrimination of the candidate.

2.3. First, or Hari-Nāma, Initiation

2.3.1. Qualifications for First Initiation

2.3.1.1. One year preparatory period

In order to receive first initiation one must have been engaged favorably in devotional service, strictly following the four regulative principles and chanting sixteen rounds a day, for at least one year without interruption.

2.3.1.1.1. First six-month period

During the first six months of following the four regulative principles and chanting sixteen rounds daily, a new devotee who is aspiring for initiation should not commit himself to a particular initiating guru. Rather, he should chant Śrīla Prabhupāda's pranāma mantra and worship him as Founder-Ācārya of ISKCON and as his śikṣā guru.

2.3.1.1.2. Second six-month period

After successfully completing the first six-month preparatory period, and after passing the required examination, the candidate may choose his future dīkṣā guru. Receiving permission from that guru, and notifying the local temple president, the candidate should take shelter and begin to worship that guru as his own spiritual master and chant his pranāma mantra. Actual initiation may take place only after a minimum six-month period from the date shelter was taken and the local temple president notified.

2.3.1.1.3. Devotees residing within temple communities

In addition to satisfying the above requirements, devotees residing in temple communities must, during the one-year preparatory period, regularly attend the full morning program.

2.3.1.1.4. Devotees residing outside temple communities

Devotees who do not live in a temple community and who cannot come daily to the temple programs may be initiated provided they have regular morning programs at home or attend regular morning programs at the nāma hatta center.

2.3.1.2. Pass examination

Before a devotee can be permitted to formally take shelter of a particular ISKCON spiritual master and be subsequently recommended for initiation, he or she must demonstrate a basic understanding of Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings by answering an oral or written test administered by the temple president or other recommending authority. The questions to be answered are:

1. What are the qualifications of a bona fide spiritual master?
2. Why are you convinced to follow the orders of the spiritual master in this life, and even life after life?
3. Why does one worship the spiritual master like God?
4. Do you believe the spiritual master speaks the absolute truth? If so, why?
5. Under what circumstances should the spiritual master be rejected?
6. What are the qualifications and responsibilities of a disciple?
7. What is the unique position of Śrīla Prabhupāda in ISKCON?
8. Why do you accept Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead?
9. Why do we follow the four regulative principles?
10. Why do we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa?
11. What is the position of the GBC Body?
12. Explain the difference between the body and the self.
13. What is ISKCON, and why should one remain in ISKCON?

2.3.2. Change of Prospective Guru

Sometimes a candidate for initiation who had formally accepted shelter from one spiritual master as a prospective initiating guru may subsequently decide to change to another. Such a candidate must communicate this change to the former prospective spiritual master, new prospective spiritual master, and local temple president. The candidate must also remain fixed under the shelter of the newly proposed initiating guru for six continuous months prior to receiving initiation, starting from the time of newly accepting formal shelter.

2.3.3. Procedure of Formal Recommendation

This formal recommendation process is not intended to replace or overshadow the (more important) need for other regular contact among the various ISKCON devotees guiding the candidate and his prospective spiritual master regarding the spiritual progress of the candidate. Furthermore, the prospective spiritual master is under no obligation to initiate a devotee because a proper recommendation has been given.

2.3.3.1. Guru receives recommendation in writing

Before a candidate can receive first initiation, his prospective guru must receive a formal written recommendation [contents specified in §2.3.3.2 below] from the appropriate ISKCON spiritual authority, as determined by the candidate's situation. [See §2.3.3.4 and §2.3.3.5 below]

2.3.3.2. Contents of recommendation

The recommendation of the recommending ISKCON authority must certify that the candidate has fulfilled the qualifications for initiation to the best of his understanding. The recommending authority must specifically attest that the candidate has been engaged in favorable devotional service, has chanted sixteen rounds of japa daily, has adhered to the four regulative principles, and has regularly attended a morning program, all for the previous twelve months.

The recommender must also attest that the candidate is sufficiently knowledgeable in the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and in the structure and purpose of ISKCON to have passed the prescribed examination, and that he has accepted shelter of the guru for at least six months.

2.3.3.3. Recommender contacts previous authorities

If the candidate has not been serving continuously within the jurisdiction of the recommending ISKCON authority for the previous twelve months, then the recommender must still satisfy himself with the activities of the candidate for the full twelve-month period by contacting other ISKCON authorities with knowledge of the candidate's activities during the balance time.

2.3.3.4. Devotees residing in temple communities

Before a candidate can receive first initiation, the guru must receive a written recommendation from the temple president under whom the candidate is currently serving.

If said temple president is also the prospective initiating guru, then the following special procedures must be observed: Either the local GBC shall write the recommendation himself, or he shall establish a local Board of Initiations, which does not include the prospective guru as a member, to review the qualifications of the candidates. The chairman of this Board of Initiations may then prepare the necessary written recommendations. In the extreme case that the local GBC, temple president, and prospective guru are all the same person, the GBC Executive Committee shall establish the appropriate procedures to be followed.

2.3.3.5. Devotees residing away from temple communities

Qualified candidates for initiation who reside away from temple communities may be recommended for initiation (in the manner prescribed above) by one of the following spiritual authorities (excluding the prospective initiating guru) who knows them well: a local GBC, the nearest temple president, the local regional secretary, the concerned congregational preaching director, or an ISKCON sannyāsi who is regularly preaching in that area.

2.3.4. Vows of Disciple

All new initiates must take the following vows at the time of initiation:

2.3.4.1. Sixteen rounds

To chant a minimum of sixteen rounds daily without fail.

2.3.4.2. Four regulative principles

To follow the four regulative principles (no meat eating, no illicit sex, no intoxication, no gambling) strictly.

2.3.4.3. Follow spiritual master's order

To accept the order of the spiritual master as one's life and soul.

2.3.4.4. Fidelity to ISKCON's Founder-Ācārya

To accept discipleship into the Brahma-Madhva Gaudiya Sampradāya through the Founder-Ācārya of ISKCON and to remain faithful to their order and teachings.

2.3.4.5. Loyalty to ISKCON

To remain faithful to Śrīla Prabhupāda's order by maintaining loyalty to ISKCON and its ultimate managing authority, the GBC.

2.4. Second, or Brahminical, Initiation

2.4.1. Qualification for Second Initiation

2.4.1.1. One-year wait between first and second initiation

To be qualified to receive second initiation, a first-initiated devotee must have been steadily engaged in favorable devotional service, chanting sixteen rounds a day without fail, and strictly following the four regulative principles for a period of at least one year from the time of receiving first initiation. In addition, the candidate must have regularly attended a morning program, whether in a temple, preaching center, nāma-hatta center, or at home.

2.4.1.2. Two-year wait for those who fall severely

A devotee who, after receiving first initiation, falls severely from the spiritual standard by neglecting or forsaking his initiation vows in a serious way or by rejecting the association of ISKCON devotees for a prolonged time, shall, after he returns to normal practice, be required to wait for at least two years before being given second initiation.

2.4.1.3. Examination option of initiating guru

It is the responsibility of the initiating guru to determine the fitness of his disciple for brahminical initiation. To help do this, he may require his disciple to pass a suitable examination.

2.4.2. Procedure for Formal Recommendation

2.4.2.1. Guru receives recommendation in writing

The guru of a candidate for second initiation must receive a written recommendation [contents specified in §2.4.2.2 below] from the appropriate ISKCON authority. The appropriate authority is determined in the same manner as described above for first initiation.

2.4.2.2. Contents of letter of recommendation

The recommending authority must certify that the candidate has fulfilled the qualifications for second initiation to the best of his understanding. The recommending authority must specifically attest that:

- a) the candidate has been steadily engaged in favorable devotional service, has chanted sixteen rounds of japa daily, adhered to the four regulative principles, and regularly attended a morning program, all for the previous twelve months (having received first initiation more than twelve months before);
- b) the candidate has either not fallen severely [see §2.4.1.2 above] since first initiation or has been in good standing for at least two years since returning to normal practice.

2.4.2.3. Recommender contacts previous authorities

As in the case of a recommendation for first initiation, if the candidate has not been serving continuously within the jurisdiction of the recommending ISKCON authority for the previous twelve months, then the recommender must still satisfy himself with the activities of the candidate for the full twelve-month period by contacting other ISKCON authorities who have knowledge of the candidate's activities during the balance time.

2.4.3. Restoration of Brahminical Status

If an initiated brāhmaṇa falls severely from the spiritual standard by neglecting or forsaking his initiation vows in a serious way or by rejecting the regular association of devotees for a prolonged time, and then later returns to the spiritual standard, the following procedure is to be observed:

- a) The devotee should not wear a sacred thread, chant gāyatrī mantra, or serve the Deity until he has strictly followed and practiced devotional service for a period of no less than six months.
- b) He may put on the sacred thread, resume chanting gāyatrī, and serve the Deity only after he proves himself fit in the judgment of his spiritual master and local spiritual authority.
- c) If, in the judgment of his spiritual master, the deviation was exceptionally severe or prolonged, the spiritual master may again give the disciple gāyatrī mantra. If the spiritual master is beyond mortal vision, the local GBC representative shall decide the proper course of action.

2.5. Initiation Only from Approved Gurus

Devotees who live or serve in ISKCON may take initiation only from ISKCON-approved gurus. [See §1.4 above for approval process]

2.5.1. Violators

2.5.1.1. First initiation outside

ISKCON members who, in violation of ISKCON law, take initiation from gurus who have not been approved to initiate in ISKCON shall not be permitted to serve within ISKCON. If the non-approved guru has an institution or āśrama outside ISKCON, then according to standard etiquette, his disciples should serve within the institution of their guru and should not serve within ISKCON. (This rule does not apply to persons who were already initiated before they became ISKCON members.)

2.5.1.2. Other initiations outside

Anyone initiated in ISKCON who has taken any further initiation, or reinitiation, from a non-approved guru must renounce their initiation from the non-approved guru in order to

work within ISKCON. Their ISKCON spiritual master (or if their spiritual master is beyond mortal vision, the local GBC) shall decide the proper procedure for reinstating them in ISKCON, including the need for taking any further initiation.

2.5.2. Prior Initiation by Non-Bona Fide Gurus

Persons who have taken initiation from non-bona fide gurus before becoming members of ISKCON should follow the injunction of Śrīla Jivā Gosvāmi that such a useless guru, a family priest acting as guru, should be given up, and that the proper, bona fide guru should be accepted.

2.6. Śrīla Prabhupāda's Disciple By First Initiation

A devotee who has received first initiation from Śrīla Prabhupāda has become Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciple. By accepting second initiation from a Godbrother after Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance, the disciple further confirms his relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda and also becomes a disciple of that initiating Godbrother. The second initiation strengthens, not diminishes, one's standing as Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciple. A disciple should always respect a worthy Godbrother from whom he has received second initiation. What such a devotee and the second-initiating guru expect from one another in their relationship shall arise from their own mutual understanding.

2.7. Reinitiation

A devotee whose guru has fallen and who seeks re-initiation from an approved guru must observe the following requirements:

- a) a six-month period of formally taking shelter,
- b) a formal letter of recommendation from the appropriate local authority, and
- c) acceptance by the initiating guru.

"ON MY ORDER" UNDERSTOOD

An Official GBC Paper

WHEREAS ISKCON devotees and leaders have repeatedly requested a clear vision from the GBC on Srila Prabhupada's order in 1977 regarding continuing the disciplic succession, but as yet it has not been presented:

WHEREAS many interpretations on the "appointment tapes" have been published by the GBC and outside parties, many inimical to ISKCON, and a clear GBC stand would help ISKCON devotees in their preaching and search for unity in diversity;

WHEREAS a clearer concept and a general consensus on many things have been achieved after discussions and philosophical research;

WHEREAS the siddhanta in regard to Guru-tattva in ISKCON has been unclear, and there is a need for a statement from the GBC to give direction;

THEREFORE IT IS RESOLVED THAT:

The following conclusions are accepted as the official GBC position in regard to Srila Prabhupada's instructions regarding continuing the disciplic succession:

(1) Srila Prabhupada's explicit and consistent desire and program had always been that eventually His Divine Grace's disciples and followers would take up the service of initiating new disciples into the disciplic succession as initiating gurus¹. This procedure is supported by all evidence from sadhu, sastra and guru as the bona fide method of continuing the disciplic succession. In fact, this is the only concept of continuing the disciplic succession ever mentioned by Srila Prabhupada.

(2) In 1977 Srila Prabhupada repeatedly said he would "select," "choose," "appoint," or "designate" some disciples to take up the service of initiating new disciples. When Srila Prabhupada was asked who would initiate after his physical departure he stated he would "recommend" and give his "order" to some of his disciples who would initiate on his behalf during his lifetime and afterwards as "regular gurus," whose disciples would be Srila Prabhupada's grand-disciples. Srila Prabhupada repeatedly cited Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu's statement "*amar ajna*

guru hoiya" and stated that one would be eligible to act as an initiating guru based "on my order", i.e. on the "order" of Srila Prabhupada as the representative of Lord Caitanya.² Subsequently Srila Prabhupada named some disciples to initiate on his behalf, as he had previously stated.³ Although Srila Prabhupada did not repeat his earlier statements it was understood that he expected these disciples to initiate in the future. Srila Prabhupada stated that the primary qualification for being a spiritual master is "not difficult," that is to "strictly follow" the previous spiritual masters.⁴ Srila Prabhupada's repeated use of the phrase "on my order" makes it abundantly clear that those who would be "selected" were simply to strictly carry out His Divine Grace's "order" and as long as they did so they would be bona fide spiritual masters. It is up to Srila Prabhupada's followers to be and remain qualified by strictly following his instructions.

(3) In ISKCON the basis of anyone's acting as an ISKCON spiritual master is the transcendental "order" of Srila Prabhupada which conveys in succession the Divine order of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu. It is therefore clear that Srila Prabhupada's use of words like "appoint," "recommend" or "select" was not in the mundane sense of appointing someone to a post or position, and certainly not to some state of "realization," nor as a full endorsement of qualification as has been commonly misunderstood, but is rather a conditional mandate dependent on the follower's "strictly following" the "order" of the spiritual master. In fact, the Sanskrit word "*ajna*" means to be the order carrier or to represent a higher authority. Failing to "follow strictly" the "order" of the previous acaryas would disenfranchise the putative guru.⁵ Although Srila Prabhupada was a pure devotee of Lord Krishna and a liberated soul, he humbly presented as his only qualification that he was a humble "servant of the servant," that he was simply carrying the "order" and strictly following the instructions of his spiritual master Om Visnupada Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur, who was a liberated soul. Srila

Prabhupada taught by example. Therefore, His Divine Grace's "selecting" someone would be to do what Srila Prabhupada stated he was doing, i.e. simply to "carry the order" of the previous acaryas.⁶ Reinforcing that truth is Srila Prabhupada's well-known instruction that a spiritual master must always consider himself a disciple and servitor of his own guru.

(4) After Srila Prabhupada named some disciples to initiate, his personal secretary suggested some others for also starting to initiate, but Srila Prabhupada, after considering the matter, said they were not yet ready. His Divine Grace said the GBC could consider and later add others when needed. Thus, by delegating that duty to the GBC, Srila Prabhupada personally detailed the procedure for increasing the number of initiating gurus. Earlier, His Divine Grace had taught Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur's instruction that his Governing Body Commission would be responsible to "elect" qualified devotees to be initiating gurus. When asked who would succeed him, His Divine Grace said that he "gave the legacy" to all his disciples and whoever strictly follows him is qualified to succeed him.⁷

(5) When a devotee is allowed to carry out the "order" of Srila Prabhupada to expand the disciplic succession by initiating new disciples it is not to be taken as a certification or endorsement of his being an "uttama adhikary," "pure devotee," or to having achieved any specific state of realization. It is simply a statement that the devotee has been given permission to execute the "order" to serve as a guru because it was considered that he was "strictly following" Srila Prabhupada's instructions and had maintained an adequately exemplary sadhana and behavior up to the standard approved for serving as a guru. Moreover, Srila Prabhupada never stated that he was appointing an "Acarya", or an independent or "absolute authority", for the sampradaya. To the contrary, His Divine Grace established the Governing Body Commission and said that the GBC would be the "ultimate managing authority" for all affairs (material and spiritual) of the society in accordance to sadhu, sastra and guru.⁸ Gurus and disciples are expected to cooperate and follow the decisions of the GBC as desired of Srila Prabhupada.

(6) It may be that in the future a devotee may achieve great realization and advancement in Krishna consciousness and become a "self-effulgent acarya," a renowned "Acarya" for the sampradaya, but Srila Prabhupada stated such things are not to be confirmed by administrative decrees or actions. If an advanced devotee's spiritual qualities are "self-effulgent," devotees may naturally accept him as an "acarya" or advanced or realized spiritual master and his association and guidance will be sought, but the GBC cannot "rubber stamp" him nor change ISKCON's system of management consequently. ISKCON will continue to be managed as Srila Prabhupada provided without "change" by the GBC. That is Srila Prabhupada's instruction.⁹

(7) Uninitiated ISKCON devotees should seek out a spiritual master who is strictly following Srila Prabhupada's instructions and representing Srila Prabhupada with full faith that by following such a spiritual master who is strictly following a liberated soul they will achieve the same results obtainable by serving Srila Prabhupada directly. (Other instructions in this regard may be separately published.)

(8) Disciples are to respect their spiritual masters as direct representatives of Krishna, i.e. as "*saksad hari-ivena*," in accordance with sastras. Disciples should worship their spiritual master according to their faith and according to the standard Vaisnava etiquette approved by ISKCON. All ISKCON devotees should encourage disciples in developing faith in their spiritual masters.

NOTES

¹ As early as 1967 Srila Prabhupada wrote:

"Anyone following the order of Lord Caitanya under the guidance of His bonafide representative, can become a spiritual master and I wish that in my absence all my disciples become bonafide spiritual masters to spread Krishna Consciousness throughout the whole world." (Letter to Madhusudana 02-11-67)

and in 1968 he wrote to Hamsaduta:

"Maybe by 1975 all of my disciples will be allowed to initiate and increase the number of the generations. That is my program." (*Letter to Hamsaduta Swami*)

Also,

"Therefore if anyone is anxious to be initiated, he should first of all hear our philosophy and join chanting at least for three months, and then if required, I shall send chanted beads for him if you recommend. As we are doing here. Don't be allured by such maya. I am training you all to become future spiritual masters, but do not be in a hurry. (21st August, 1968. *Letter to Acyutananda and Jaya Govinda*)

"I am just trying to disseminate this message of my spiritual master and if there's any credit for this service, everything goes to Him. This message of Krishna Consciousness is coming down from Krishna Himself, and we are all servants of the Supreme Lord working under the consecutive disciplic succession. Please try to understand our philosophy through various books that I have already published and sometimes after you will have to carry out this order of disciplic succession." (14th March, 1969, *Letter to Prahladananda*)

"Some time ago you asked my permission for accepting some disciples, now the time is approaching very soon when you will have many disciples by your strong preaching work. Stick to the line of our strong preaching method and many misguided persons will be blessed by your proper guiding." (16th May, 1972, *Letter to Acyutananda*)

"I have heard that there is some worship of yourself by the other devotees. Of course it is proper to offer obeisances to a Vaisnava, but not in the presence of the spiritual master. After the departure of the spiritual master, it will come to that stage, but now wait. Otherwise it will create factions." (1st October, 1974, *Letter to Hamsaduta das*)

"Now has the GBC become more than Guru Maharaja? As if simply GBC is meant for

looking after pounds, shilling, pence. The GBC does not look after spiritual life. That is a defect. All of our students will have to become guru, but they are not qualified. This is the difficulty." (10th November, 1975, *Letter to Alalanatha das*)

"Keep trained up very rigidly and then you are bonafide Guru, and you can accept disciples on the same principle. But as a matter of etiquette it is the custom that during the lifetime of your spiritual master you bring the prospective disciples to him, and in his absence or disappearance you can accept disciples without any limitation. This is the law of disciplic succession. I want to see my disciples become bonafide spiritual master and spread Krishna consciousness very widely, that will make me and Krishna very happy." (2nd December, 1975, *Letter to Tuṣṭa Krishna Swami*)

² Vrindavan, May 28, 1977

Satsvarupa: By the votes of the present GBC. Then our next question concerns initiations in the future, particularly at that time when you're no longer with us. We want to know how first and second initiation would be conducted.

Prabhupada: Yes. I shall recommend some of you. After this is settled up, I shall recommend some of you to act as officiating acaryas.

Tamala Kṛṣṇa: Is that called rtvik-acarya?

Prabhupada: Rtvik, yes.

Satsvarupa: Then what is the relationship of that person who gives the initiation and the...

Prabhupada: He's guru. He's guru.

Satsvarupa: But he does it on your behalf.

Prabhupada: Yes. That is formality. Because in my presence one should not become guru, so on my behalf, on my order... *Amara ajnaya guru hana*. Be actually guru, but by my order.

Satsvarupa: So they may also be considered your disciples.

Prabhupada: Yes, they are disciples. Why consider? Who?

Tamala Kṛṣṇa: No, he's asking that these rtvik-acaryas, they're officiating, giving diksa. Their...

The people who they give diksa to, whose disciples are they?

Prabhupada: They're his disciples

Tamala Krsna: They're his disciples

Prabhupada: Who is initiating? He is granddisciple.

Satsvarupa: Yes.

Tamala Krsna: That's clear

Satsvarupa: Then we have a question concer...

Prabhupada: When I order, "You become guru," he becomes regular guru. That's all. He becomes disciple of my disciple. That's it

Prabhupada: And Caitanya Mahaprabhu says, *amara ajnaya guru hana*. One can understand the order of Caitanya Mahaprabhu, he can become guru. Or one who understands his-guru's order, the same parampara, he can become guru. And therefore I shall select some of you. (hums)

It should also be noted that in most cases when Srila Prabhupada spoke about his disciples becoming gurus he cited the *amara ajna* verse.

³ July 7, 1977, Vrindavan

Tamala Krsna: Those are their favorite words. Srila Prabhupada? We're receiving a number of letters now, and these are people who want to get initiated. So up until now, since your becoming ill, we asked them to wait.

Prabhupada: The local, mean, senior sannyasis can do that.

Tamala Krsna: That's what we were doing... I mean, formerly we were... The local GBC, sannyasis, were chanting on their beads, and they were writing to Your Divine Grace, and you were giving a spiritual name. So should that process be resumed, or should we...? I mean one thing is that it's said that the spiritual master takes on the... You know, he takes on the... He has to cleanse the disciple by... So we don't want that you should have to... Your health is not so good, so that should not be... That's why we've been asking everybody to wait. I just want to know if we should continue to wait some more time.

Prabhupada: No, the senior sannyasis...

Tamala Krsna: So they should continue to...

Prabhupada: You can give me a list of sannyasis. I will mark who will...

Tamala Krsna: Okay.

Prabhupada: You can do. Kirtanananda can do. And our Satsvarupa can do. So these three, you can give, begin.

Tamala Krsna: So supposing someone is in America, should they simply write directly to Kirtanananda or Satsvarupa?

Prabhupada: Nearby. Jayatirtha can give.

Tamala Krsna: Jayatirtha.

Prabhupada: Bhavanan..., er, Bhagavan. And he can do also. Harikesa.

Tamala Krsna: Harikesa Maharaja.

Prabhupada: And... Five, six men, you divide who is nearest.

Tamala Krsna: Who is nearest. So persons wouldn't have to write to Your Divine Grace. They could write directly to that person?

Prabhupada: Hm.

Tamala Krsna: Actually they are initiating the person on Your Divine Grace's behalf. Those persons who are initiated are still your...

Prabhupada: Second initiation we shall think over, second initiation.

Tamala Krsna: This is for first initiation, okay. And for second initiation, for the time being they should...

Prabhupada: No, they have to wait. Second initiation, that should be given...

Tamala Krsna: Should... Some devotees are writing you now for second initiation, and I'm writing them to wait a while because you're not well. So can I continue to tell them that?

Prabhupada: They can do second initiation.

Tamala Krsna: By writing you-

Prabhupada: No. These men.

Tamala Krsna: These men, they can also do second initiation. So there's no need for devotees to write to you for first and second initiation. They can write to the man nearest them. But all these persons are still your disciples. Anybody who gives initiation is doing so on your behalf.

Prabhupada: Yes.

Tamala Krsna: You know that book I'm maintaining of all of your disciples' names? Should I continue that?

Prabhupada: Hm.

Tamala Krsna: So if someone gives initiation, like Harikesa Maharaja, he should send the person's name to us here and I'll enter it in the book. Okay. Is there someone else in India that you want to do this?

Prabhupada: India, I am here. We shall see. In India, Jayapataka.

Tamala Krsna: Jayapataka Maharaja.

Prabhupada: You are also in India.

Tamala Krsna: Yes.

Prabhupada: You can note down these names.

Tamala Krsna: Yes, I have them.

Prabhupada: Who are they?

Tamala Krsna: Kirtanananda Maharaja, Satsvarupa Maharaja, Jayatirtha Prabhu, Bhagavan Prabhu, Harikesa Maharaja, Jayapataka Maharaja and Tamala Krsna Maharaja.

Prabhupada: That's nice. Now you distribute.

Tamala Krsna: Seven. There's seven names.

Prabhupada: For the time being, seven names, sufficient. You can make Ramesvara.

Tamala Krsna: Ramesvara Maharaja.

Prabhupada: And Hridayananda.

Tamala Krsna: Oh, yeah. South America.

Prabhupada: So without waiting for me, wherever you consider it is right... That will depend on discretion.

Tamala Krsna: On discretion.

Prabhupada: Yes.

Tamala Krsna: That's for first and second initiations.

Prabhupada: Hm.

⁴ Make sure that they are well aware of the four rules and regulations and that they are fixed in chanting the prescribed number of 16 rounds daily on the beads. Without these two principles no one can make advancement on the path of regulated bhakti. Teach them the science of the Bhagavad gita and train them to be first class representatives of Krsna. It is not very difficult, simply one has to hear from the perfect authority who is in disciplic succession from Krsna Himself, and then repeat the same message without any change. If one does this then he is qualified to become guru. (Letter to Jayadharma 8 20 76)

Guru is only one. Guru means, as you explained, *ajnana-timirandhasya jnanajana-salakaya, caksur-unmilitam yena tasmai sri-gurave namah*. One who eradicates the *ajnana*, *andhakara*, darkness. In the darkness, if somebody brings lamp, *ajnana-timirandhasya jnanajana-salakaya*... The *jnanarupa*, torchlight, he's guru. So maybe of different

degrees, but anyone who opens the spiritual eyes, he's guru.

But it doesn't matter that degree. Actually, if the guru teaches Krsna consciousness, then he may be in lesser degree, but he's accepted as guru. There is no question of rejection. Because Krsna is actually jnana. One who teaches Krsna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, "One has to know Krsna, one has to surrender to Krsna," this kind of teaching is required.

So the real test is whether the guru is a Vaisnava, whether he know the science of Krsna. That is also confirmed by Caitanya Mahaprabhu: *kiba vipra kiba sudra nyasi kene naya, yei krsna-tattva vettha sei guru haya*. A... It doesn't matter what he is, whether he's a sannyasi or a gharstha or a brahmana or a su... born in brahmana family or... It doesn't matter. *Yei krsna-tattva*. Anyone who knows Krsna, he can become guru, not others. So that is the statement of the sastras. Avaisnava cannot become guru. (Lecture, Ahmedabad 13/12/72)

Just like post peon give you five thousand rupees, delivers. He does not deliver. Somebody else is delivering. He's simply carrying. That's all. Similarly, if we simply carry the message of Krsna as it is, we become perfect. It is not very difficult. If I simply carry the message of Krsna, where is the difficulty? Everything is there. Krsna has said everything. Krsna says, *man-mana bhava mad-bhakto mad-yaji mam namaskuru*. We carry this message. Just always think of Krsna, always offer obeisances to Krsna, become a devotee of Krsna. *Man-manah*, think of Krsna always. We have to carry this message. Where is the difficulty? So to become a bona fide spiritual master, there is no difficulty. If you simply, if we carry the message of Krsna as it is without any adulteration. So we must find out a person who is actually bona fide spiritual master by this test, that he's not. I mean to say adulterating Krsna's message. He's not playing havoc with the message of Krsna in order to introduce himself, his person. He's simply presenting the message of Krsna as it is. Then he's spiritual master. Nobody else. Thank you very much. (NOD Lecture, Vrindavana 31 10 72)

So Caitanya Mahaprabhu says *amara ajnaya guru hana tara ei desa yare dekha tare kaha krsna upadesa*.

He says, *amara ajnaya*, by My order, you become a spiritual master.

So one may be very illiterate, no education, (and) or no scholarship, may not be born in brahmana family, or may not be a sannyasi. There are so many qualifications. But one may not have all these qualifications. He may be rascal number one, but still, he can become spiritual master. How? *Amara ajnaya*. As Krsna says, as Caitanya Mahaprabhu says, if you follow, then you become spiritual master. One may be rascal number one from material estimation, but if he simply strictly follows whatever is said by Caitanya Mahaprabhu or His representative spiritual master, then he becomes a guru. (*Vyasa Puja address, London 21.8.73*)

It is Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's wish that everyone should become a Vaisnava and guru. Following the instructions of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and His disciplic succession, one can become a spiritual master, for the process is very easy. One can go everywhere and anywhere to preach the instructions of Krsna.

... the duty of every Vaisnava is to travel and preach Bhagavad-gita, either in his country or a foreign country. (*CCM.24.277*)

"We do not have to manufacture anything new. We are getting perfect knowledge from Krishna through the disciplic succession, so our position is very firm. Whatever we hear from the bonafide spiritual master should be practiced in life and the same message delivered to whomever we meet. In this way you become spiritual master. (*Letter to Kirtiraja 31.12.75*)

⁵ This time I have requested all Nairobi important friends that "Now you take sannyasa and become guru. Krsna Caitanya Mahaprabhu asked everyone to become guru. *Amara ajnaya guru hana tara ei desa*. You have come to Africa. Now become their guru and deliver them." "Now, how shall I do it?" *Yare dekha tare kaha krsna*

upadesa: "Simply speak. Don't become very big upstart. Simply speak what Krsna has done. That's all. You become guru." (*Conversation, Bombay 11.3.75*)

Bambarambhe laghu-kriya, in the Sanskrit word, that you can make a very high-grade arrangement, but the result is zero. So that hierarchical arrangement is exactly not in Krsna consciousness. But our method is very simple. If one is fortunate enough to meet a bona fide spiritual master and if he acts strictly under his discipline, he also becomes within a very short time another spiritual master. (*Interview, Seattle 24.9.76*)

Because people are in darkness, we require many millions of gurus to enlighten them. Therefore Caitanya Mahaprabhu's mission is, He said, that "Every one of you become guru." *Amara ajnaya guru hana tara ei desa*. You haven't got to go foreign countries. Wherever you are, you teach, become guru. It doesn't matter. *Ei desa*. He says, *ei desa*. If you have got power, you can go other country but it doesn't require. In whichever village, whichever country or town you are, you become a guru. This is Caitanya Mahaprabhu's mission. *Amara ajnaya guru hana tara ei desa*. "This country, this place." So "But I have no qualification. How can I become guru?" There is no need of qualification. "Still, I can become guru?" Yes. "How?" *Yare dekha tare kaha krsna upadesa*: "Whomever you meet, you simply instruct what Krsna has said." That's all. You become guru. Everyone is very anxious to become guru, but rascal does not know how to become guru, a simple thing.

So that is our mission. All of you who have come to Krsna consciousness movement, that is our request, that you, all of you, become guru but don't speak nonsense. That is request. Simply speak what Krsna has said. Then you become brahmana. You'll be guru, and everything. Thank you very much. (*Lecture, Honolulu 21.5.76*)

Caitanya Mahaprabhu said that "You become a guru." *Amara ajnaya guru hana tara ei desa*. "You become a guru and deliver them." So "I am a fool. I have no education. How can I become a guru?" So answer is "No, no. *Yare dekha tare kaha krsna*

upadesa." If you simply advise people what Kṛṣṇa has said, then you become guru. But if you manufacture your ideas, then you are not a guru. (Conversation Bombay 7/1/77)

Amara ajnaya guru hana tara' ei desa. Suppose you are living in that village. Caitanya Mahāprabhu says, "You become a guru here." Here. You haven't got to go out. *Ei desa*, "where you are living." Just see how nice it is. *Amara ajnaya*: "By My order, you become a guru and deliver the people of this place." This is Caitanya Mahāprabhu's... So "I am not educated, I do not know. How I shall become?" No, you haven't got to bother. *Yare dekha tare kaha kṛṣṇa-upadesa*: "Simply you repeat what Kṛṣṇa has said. You become guru." That's all. Everyone can do that. Gita is there. You sit down in your place and preach Bhagavad-gita and try to induce them to take it. You become guru. (Conversation, Bombay 23/4/77)

Our Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mission is that "You become guru," as I was telling, "and teach, deliver persons where you are." If you say, "How can I become guru?" there is no difficulty. Simply repeat the words of Bhagavad-gita. That's all. You become guru. So our mission is to create real guru, not these jugglers. And real guru is he who speaks on behalf of Kṛṣṇa. And that is wan... It is very simple.

This is our mission. Everything is there. Caitanya Mahāprabhu says, *yare dekha tare kaha kṛṣṇa-upade...* "You simply make your life successful by understanding Bhagavad-gita and preach this. You become guru." So where is the difficulty? Why don't you do that? (Conversation, Bombay 24/4/77)

This is very easy. So I am not a scholar. I am simply... Whatever is said there, I am trying to distribute in a palatable way. That's all. It is not my manufacture. And that is Caitanya Mahāprabhu's... *Amara ajnaya guru hana tara ei desa*. You all become guru. "How can I become guru? I have no education. I have no knowledge." No, you haven't got to acquire all these things. That is already... *Yare dekha tare kaha*. Finished. So I never tried to become a scholar. But I tried, whatever is spoken by Kṛṣṇa, deliver. That's all. And that is guru. (Conversation, Vrindavan 26/6/77)

⁶ "Personally I am humble servant of Krishna as you are also, but I am deputed to accept your service just to transfer it to Krishna as via media. I shall try to do this service to you and Krishna throughout my life, and I am so proud to have such assistants as you are to help me in my mission to push on the Krishna Consciousness Movement" (Letter to Dayananda, 5/1/69)

"You are all my children and I love my American boys and girls who are sent to me by my spiritual master and I have accepted them as my disciples." (Letter to Satsvarupa and Uddhava, 7/27/70)

"Practically, I do not have any disciples. I select so many masters to train them in the service of the Lord." (Letter to Jai Mazo, 1/18/68)

"I have not done anything personally, very wonderful. I am simply serving my spiritual master, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Goswami Maharaja and all the acaryas in the disciplic succession." (Letter to Bhima das et al, 5/16/74)

⁷ November 2, 1977

Prabhupada: ...after you, who will take the leadership?" And "Everyone will take, all my disciples. If you want, you can take also. (laughter) But if you follow. They are prepared to sacrifice everything, so they'll take the leadership. I may, one, go away, but there will be hundreds, and they'll preach. If you want, you can also become a leader. We have no such thing, that 'Here is leader.' Anyone who follows the previous leadership, he's a leader. 'Indian,' we have no such distinction, 'Indian,' 'European.'"

Brahmananda: They wanted an Indian to be the leader?

Prabhupada: Yes. (laughs) "Everyone, all my disciples, they are leaders. As purely as they follow, they become leader. If you want to follow, you can become a leader. You are Indian. But you don't want." I told them that.

Tamala Kṛṣṇa: Yes, they probably wanted to propose somebody who would take over our movement.

Prabhupada: Yes. Leaders. All nonsense. Leader means one who has become first-class disciple. He is leader. Evam parampara-prapta. One who is perfectly following... Our instruction is *ara na kariha mane asa*. You know this? What is that? *Guru-mukha-padma-vakya, cittete kariya aikya, ara na kariha mane asa*. Who is leader? A leader, to become leader, is not very difficult, provided one is prepared to follow the instructions of a bona fide guru.

⁸ See Prabhupada's will.

⁹ "He [Srila Bhaktisiddhanta] never asked anybody to become acarya. He asked that 'You form a governing body of twelve men and go on preaching. . . . ' None, none of them were advised by Guru Maharaja to become acarya. His idea was 'Let them manage; then whoever will be actually qualified for becoming acarya, they will elect. Why I should enforce upon them?' That was his plan. 'Let them manage by strong governing body, as it is going on. Then acarya will come by his qualifications.'" (Conversation, Bombay 9/21/73)

"His [Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's] idea was acarya was not to be nominated amongst the governing body . . . a self effulgent acarya would be automatically selected." (Letter to Rupanuga, 4/28/74)

"A vaisnava acarya is self-effulgent, and there is no need for any court judgment." (C.c. Madhya 1.220)

"A powerful Vaisnava who has converted others into Vaisnavas is to be worshipped, but because of material contamination, sometimes such an exalted Vaisnava is disrespected by other, minor Vaisnavas."

" . . . It has actually been seen that even an authorized devotee who is engaged in the service of the Lord by preaching the mission of Krsna consciousness is sometimes criticized by neophyte devotees."

" . . . Neophytes, unable to appreciate the exalted service of the advanced devotee, try to bring the maha-bhagavata to their platform. We experience such difficulty in propagating this Krsna consciousness all over the world. Unfortunately we are surrounded by neophyte Godbrothers who do not appreciate the extraordinary activities of spreading Krsna consciousness all over the world. They simply try to bring us to their platform, and they try to criticize us in every respect. We very much regret their naive activities and poor fund of knowledge. An empowered person who is actually engaged in the confidential service of the Lord should not be treated as an ordinary human being, for it is stated that unless one is empowered by Krsna, one cannot spread the Krsna consciousness movement all over the world." (NOI, Text 6, pp.64)

DEVOTEES INITIATING BEFORE THEIR GURU'S PHYSICAL DEPARTURE

An Official GBC Paper

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sārasvatī Thākura's View

Some of Śrīla Prabhupāda's godbrothers were approached to find out what Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sārasvatī Thākura's view was on this issue. All of them informed [us] that *none of his disciples gave initiation when he was present*. His Divine Grace did not instruct anyone to give initiation during his presence nor for that matter did he give any specific instructions about them initiating after his disappearance.

In the Gaudīya Matha after Śrīla Om Visnupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sārasvatī Thākura's disappearance the etiquette of not initiating in the presence of the spiritual master has continued. In fact, if anyone breaks from this tradition he is excommunicated from their mission.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's Instructions

Although apparently Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sārasvatī Thākura did not specifically, in black and white, instruct anything about a disciple not giving initiation when the guru is present, it is quite clearly implied in the instructions below. The question of initiating in the presence of one's guru is inappropriate for a disciple who naturally is cultivating his service attitude to the guru. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sārasvatī Thākura was very emphatic about the disciple's sincere dedication to his guru. The following quotes are from a Bengali book called *Srī Śrīla Prabhupāder Upadeśāmṛta*:

Q Will I be able to accept disciples?

A "Give up envy and show mercy to living entities—living entities who become averse to Kṛṣṇa, make them Kṛṣṇa conscious. Do not become a guru to become envious. Do not become a guru in order to drown yourself in sense gratification—do not become a guru just for show off. But if you can become a sincere servant of your guru and Kṛṣṇa, if you can

receive their mercy-potency, then there is nothing to fear. Otherwise there will be disaster." (Page 235)

"If one is not dedicated to his guru he can not be qualified to be a guru." (Page 337)

Q: What is the difference between guru and me?

A: I am lighter than the lightest; even lighter than that. But one who is serving the greatest constantly, that spiritual master is greater than the greatest; even greater than that. (Page 235)

Q: Is it true that without the mercy of the spiritual master nothing can be achieved?

A: Yes. I am blind, who will show me the way other than the guru? Everything is achieved by the mercy of the guru. We are *laghu* (light), our only shelter is the guru. He who serves the Lord all the time in all respects, he is the guru.

Q: Does one invite misfortune when he does not follow the orders of his spiritual master properly?

A: Of course! If one does not follow the orders of his spiritual master who is the personification of all auspiciousness, he will suffer misfortune—his material desires will increase, and after death he will go to hell. He who does not follow the order of his spiritual master, is a resident of hell. He is a materialist or a big sense enjoyer. One who disobeys the order of his spiritual master enters in the womb of a pig. Those who have strong desire for sense enjoyment, even after getting a bona fide spiritual master due to their good fortune, due to the inability to serve the spiritual master with heart and soul, do not derive any spiritual benefit. Due to their inability to appreciate the value of this priceless object, they consider this material nature to be real, and suffer life after life. (Page 506)

From these statements of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura it is clear that only a qualified disciple can become a bona fide spiritual master and a true disciple simply depends upon the mercy of his spiritual master in order to do anything. The disciple's only desire is to satisfy the spiritual master. Whatever the guru orders the disciple must carry out, including the order to give initiation and accept disciples, with a sense of duty, as a service to his spiritual master. But he himself always feels unqualified to execute such a serious responsibility. The more one feels unqualified the more he receives the mercy of the guru; and that enables him to become qualified.

Vedic View

In the Vedic society a disciple does not usually give initiation when his spiritual master is present. A disciple naturally feels unqualified to take up such a serious responsibility, especially when his guru is present; and his natural tendency is to bring the fruits of his preaching to his guru. (Since one is not supposed to canvas for his guru in ISKCON, it is expected that one should direct the candidates for initiation to Śrīla Prabhupāda and all those who are initiating now.)

There are instances when disciples gave initiation before their guru's physical departure:

- a) Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura mentioned in *Jaiva Dharma* how Paramahansa Premadas Babaji took his disciple Vaisnava dāsa to his spiritual master, Pradyumna Brahmācārī.
- b) Rāmacandra Kavirāja, a disciple of Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, gave initiation when Śrīnivāsa Ācārya was present on the planet.

There are many such instances in the scriptures about disciples giving initiation in the presence of guru, but that was done only when the disciples were extremely qualified and spiritual masters ordered them to do so. Hari Bhakti Vilāsa states:

*guror gaurau sannihite
guruvād vṛttimācaret*

"If the spiritual master of the spiritual master is present, then he should be treated as the guru." (H.B.V. 1:59)

This statement proves that acceptance of disciples in the presence of one's spiritual master has been approved by the scriptures.

In the scriptures there is no specific instruction about a disciple not giving initiation when his guru is present. About transgression of etiquette, we found only one verse in the Hari Bhakti Vilāsa:

*varnottame 'tha ca gurau sati ya viśruto 'pa ca
svadeśato 'tha vanyātra nedam kāryam
subhārthina*

"When a superior guru (with aforementioned qualities) is present at home or abroad, a person born in a lower caste should not try to bestow his mercy in the form of giving mantra if he desires his own good." (H.B.V. 1:37)

But this initiation is based on the consideration of varṇa. Regarding this statement, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura mentioned in his *Amṛta-pravāha-bhāṣya* of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*:

"Knowledge about Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate objective of all living entities. Regarding how one can become qualified to give that knowledge it has been concluded that irrespective of one's position as a *brāhmaṇa* or *sūdra*, householder or *sannyāsī*, one can become a guru as long as he is well conversant with the knowledge of Kṛṣṇa. The consideration of *Hari Bhakti Vilāsa* is for those Vaisnavas who are concerned about social customs; i.e. for those who want to make a little spiritual progress by following customary social regulations. But those who want to acquire pure devotion after understanding the significance of *vaidhi* and *rāgānuga bhakti*, should accept a qualified spiritual master without considering his *varṇa* and *āśrama*." (CC. Madhya 8.127)

In Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings also it is clear that the main qualification of a guru is his Kṛṣṇa consciousness. All Vaisnava *ācāryas* have been very emphatic about this point.

Although not much has been said about this etiquette, yet it is known to everyone that

transgression of etiquette, i.e. to disregard the position of a senior, is deemed to be a great offense. In Vedic culture the position of the spiritual master is considered to be the highest and transgression of etiquette in this relation was always considered to be extremely dangerous.

There are some unusual instances where disciples gave initiation in the presence of guru under some special circumstances. We did not research on what those special circumstances were.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's Views

Śrīla Prabhupāda was very emphatic that a disciple should not initiate in the presence of his guru. He told many of his disciples that even though they may be qualified, they should not give initiation as long as the spiritual master is present, because that is the etiquette. He emphatically told that to Jayapataka Mahārāja. The day Śrīla Prabhupāda gave *sannyāsa* to Bhakti Caru Swami, he told him, "Now that you are a *sannyāsi*, you can give initiation. But as long as the spiritual master is alive one doesn't give initiation. That is the etiquette."

He wrote to Tusta Kṛṣṇa Swami, "Keep trained up very rigidly and then you are bona fide Guru, and you can accept disciples on the same principle. But as a matter of etiquette it is the custom that during the lifetime of your spiritual master you bring the prospective disciples to him, and in his absence or disappearance you can accept disciples without any limitation. This is the law of disciplic succession. I want to see my disciples become bona fide Spiritual Master and spread Krishna consciousness very widely, that will make me and Krishna very happy."

In other letters, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote:

The first thing, I warn Acyutananda, do not try to initiate. You are not in a proper position now to initiate anyone. Besides that, the etiquette is that so long the Spiritual Master is present, all prospective disciples should be brought to him. (Letter to Acyutananda and Jayagovinda, 21 August, 1968)

Anyone following the order of Lord Caitanya under the guidance of His bona fide representative, can become a spiritual master and I wish that in my absence all my disciples become the bona fide spiritual

master to spread Krishna Consciousness throughout the whole world. (Letter to Madhusudana, 2 November, 1967)

So far as your taking initiation from Brahmananda Maharaja, I have no objection, but it is the etiquette that in the presence of one's Spiritual Master, one does not accept disciples. In this connection, Swami Brahmananda may write me and I will instruct him. (Letter to John Milner, 24 March, 1971)

Siddhasvarupa does not want to take disciples, neither he should have disciples while I am alive. That is the process. (Letter to Sudevi, 15 September, 1972)

From Madhavananda I have heard that there is some worship of yourself by the other devotees. Of course it is proper to offer obeisances to a Vaisnava, but not in the presence of the spiritual master. After the departure of the spiritual master, it will come to that stage, but now wait. Otherwise it will create factions. (Letter to Hamsaduta, 1 October, 1974)

Don't become premature *ācārya*. First of all follow the orders of *ācārya*, and you become mature. Then it is better to become *ācārya*. Because we are interested in preparing *ācārya*, but the etiquette is, at least for the period the guru is present, one should not become *ācārya*. Even if he is complete he should not, because the etiquette is, if somebody comes for becoming initiated, it is the duty of such person to bring that prospective candidate to his *ācārya*. Not that "Now people are coming to me, so I can become *ācārya*." That is *avamanya*. *Nāvamanyeta karhicit*. Don't transgress this etiquette. *Nāvamanyeta*. That will be falldown. Just like during the lifetime of our Guru Mahārāja, all our Godbrothers now who are acting as *ācārya*, they did not do so. That is not etiquette. *Ācāryam māṁ vijānīyāt na avaman...* That is insult. So if you insult your *ācārya*, then you are finished. *Yasya*

*prasādaḥ bhagavat-prasādo yasya
aprasādat na gatiḥ kuto 'pi*— finished. If
you displease your *ācārya*, then you are
finished CC 1 13 Lecture, Māyāpur, April
6, 1975.

From these quotations it is clear that Śrīla Prabhupāda did not want his disciples to initiate, no matter how qualified they may be, as long as their spiritual master was present. One may question, however, whether these instructions are applicable only to founder-*ācāryas* like Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura and Śrīla Prabhupāda. It is a fact that the founder-*ācārya* is the guru of all members of his institution, and no one gives initiation when he is present, and even after his disappearance the members of the institution become connected to him through *sikṣā* relationship. But here there is no reason to believe that these instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda were meant only for a founder-*ācārya*. The etiquette he mentioned here is a common vaisnava etiquette. It is prudent to assume that Śrīla

Prabhupāda was speaking as the Founder-*ācārya* of ISKCON, and that he is restricting all disciples of all gurus in ISKCON from initiating in the presence of their spiritual masters.

Even though in the past spiritual masters have given disciples permission to initiate in their presence, Śrīla Prabhupāda emphatically forbids it as a manner of general etiquette. We see only two places where Śrīla Prabhupāda may have indicated otherwise.¹

ISKCON is a unique institution in the history of Vaisnavism. We must assume that as Founder-*Ācārya*, Śrīla Prabhupāda had the vision to set down a law—a law suitable for that unique institution, a law we would transgress at our peril.

A disciple's only duty is to worship and serve his spiritual master. His mind should not be agitated over how he may become a guru. A devotee who sincerely wants to make spiritual advancement should try to become a disciple, not a spiritual master.

NOTES

¹ By 1975, all of those who have passed all of the above examinations will be specifically empowered to initiate and increase the number of the Krishna Consciousness population. (Letter to Kirtanananda, 12 January, 1969)

I want that all of my spiritual sons and daughters will inherit this title of Bhaktivedanta, so that the family transcendental diploma will continue through the generations. Those possessing the title of Bhaktivedanta will be allowed to initiate disciples. Maybe by 1975, all of my disciples will be allowed to initiate and increase the numbers of the

generations. That is my program. (Letter to Hamsaduta, 3 December, 1968)

These quotes raise further questions: In 1968, did Śrīla Prabhupāda expect to leave the planet before 1975? Or was he thinking of creating *ritvik* gurus who would initiate on his behalf by 1975? Whatever the answer may be, when 1975 arrived, Śrīla Prabhupāda took no steps to give his disciples the responsibility of accepting their own disciples. Indeed, his statements on this issue in 1975 (Letter to Tusta Kṛṣṇa and lecture in Māyāpur) leave no doubt that His Divine Grace gave no authorization for disciples to initiate as long as he remained on the planet. In logic, later statements supersede earlier ones in importance.

Guru-Āśrāya: Maintaining Shelter in the Guru-Paramparā

A paper offering guidance from the GBC

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Introduction

Since the relationship of a devotee with his spiritual master is so important, those members of ISKCON whose initiating gurus have fallen from the strict path of devotional service face unique difficulties. Some devotees have had their faith in ISKCON shaken, yet we have been inspired to see that many devotees in such a trying situation have not only maintained their faith and continued their devotional service, but in many cases have set outstanding examples of dedication to Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission.

Undoubtedly, all the members of ISKCON are humble servants of our beloved Founder-Ācārya, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. By his causeless mercy we can attain the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Therefore, the issue before us is exactly how the disciples of fallen gurus can best maintain their connection with Śrīla Prabhupāda and continue their progress back home, back to Godhead.

Let us begin by remembering the causeless mercy of Śrīla Prabhupāda in giving us the sublime process for becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious in this age of Kali—the sankīrtan movement, collective endeavor for spiritual advancement—and for giving us ISKCON, in which one can live and serve in transcendental association and shelter. To stay on the spiritual platform without association is practically impossible. But in the association of devotees, even the weakest devotee can withstand the severe onslaughts of māyā

[TRANSLATION] "Dhruva Mahārāja continued: O unlimited Lord, kindly bless me that I may associate with great devotees who engage in your transcendental loving

service constantly, as the waves of a river constantly flow..."

[PURPORT] "The significant point in Dhruva Mahārāja's statement is that he wanted the association of pure devotees. Transcendental devotional service cannot be complete and cannot be relishable without the association of devotees. We have therefore established the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Anyone who is trying to be aloof from this Krishna Consciousness Society and yet engage in Krishna consciousness is living in a great hallucination, for this is not possible. From this statement by Dhruva Mahārāja it is clear that unless one is associated with devotees, his devotional service does not mature; it does not become distinct from material activities. The Lord says, *satām prasāṅgān mama vīrya-saṁvido bhavanti hṛt-karṇa-rasāyanāḥ* (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.25.25). Only in the association of pure devotees can the words of Lord Kṛṣṇa be fully potent and relishable to the heart and ear. Dhruva Mahārāja explicitly wanted the association of devotees. That association in devotional activities is just like the waves of an incessantly flowing river.

"The purport of this statement by Dhruva Mahārāja is that devotional service in the association of devotees is the cause of the development of further devotional service. It is possible to mature in devotional service only in the association of devotees." (S.B. 4.9.11)

To remain in the association of devotees is vital for spiritual success in this age. Hence Śrīla Prabhupāda and the previous ācāryas emphatically and repeatedly instruct us to remain united and work with a spirit of cooperation, fixed in the transcendental mission of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu

The Need for Taking Proper Spiritual Shelter

Scripture makes clear that to take shelter of an advanced devotee is absolutely essential. Such an advanced devotee spiritual master guides the disciple to the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

The system of guru-paramparā, which is an essential aspect of Kṛṣṇa-conscious philosophy, requires that one connect with the previous ācāryas and the Founder-Ācārya by accepting śikṣā and dīkṣā from authorized representatives of the disciplic chain. To follow Śrīla Prabhupāda properly and completely, those who are not his initiated disciples should become disciples of his disciples in disciplic succession.

“... the message of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is coming down by disciplic succession, and in order to receive the real message of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* one should approach the current link, or spiritual master, in the chain of disciplic succession.” (S.B. 2.9.7)

“This is paramparā system. You cannot jump over. You must go through the paramparā system. You have to approach through your spiritual master to the Goswamis, and through the Goswamis you will have to approach Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and through Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu you have to approach Kṛṣṇa. That is the way.” (Lecture, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Ādi-līlā 1.4, Māyāpur 3/28/75)

“This is paramparā system. If a student tries to satisfy his immediate ācārya or the spiritual master, that is the only qualification for advancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This is explained in the “Gurvastakam”—*yasya prasādad bhagavat-prasado*.” (Letter to Paramānanda, 6/17/70)

“Just like you are working in office. If your immediate officer, boss, is pleased, that means the proprietor of the firm, he’s also pleased. Although you do not see him. This is fact. Your immediate boss, if he’s pleased. So similarly, we, our business, this spiritual line is guru-kṛṣṇa-kṛpā. We have to first receive the merciful benediction from the ācārya, and then Kṛṣṇa will be pleased and He’ll also give His blessings.” (Lecture, London 9/23/69)

Śrīla Prabhupāda, as the Founder-Ācārya of ISKCON, is the savior of the fallen souls, and those who follow him and assist him are his servants. Now that Śrīla Prabhupāda is no longer physically present, those who truly take shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda are those who take shelter of his servants. This will certainly please Śrīla Prabhupāda to the highest degree.

Guidance When the Guru is in Spiritual Difficulty

In 1987, the GBC gave directions and guidelines for devotees whose initiating guru was fallen. In 1988 the ISKCON Managers’ committee requested the GBC to explain how they had reached these conclusions and to give supporting evidence from Śrīla Prabhupāda, the previous ācāryas and the śāstras. In response the GBC appointed researchers to study what the sādhu, śāstra and guru say about this subject. With the results of this research this paper has been written to answer the essential questions of the devotees. To keep the whole matter in context the paper also includes a brief review of some previous recommendations of the GBC.

According to GBC guidelines, when a guru is situated as a devotee but suffers a falldown his disciples should not immediately reject him, but should pray and wait for his rectification:

That if a guru is engaged in sense gratification violating either one or more of the regulative principles but there is hope that he can be rectified, then his disciples should allow time for such rectification to take place and they should take shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda and senior Vaisnavas as śikṣa gurus. (1987 GBC Resolution 65)

It is natural that the disciple will be fixed in the conclusion that the spiritual master cannot be subject to criticism, as this is Śrīla Prabhupāda's advice. In the *Harī-bhakti-vilas*, verse 359, the *Āditya-purāṇa* states how one should not immediately reject a Vaisnava guru who is in difficulty:

*avidyo va savidyo va gurur eva janardanah
sarga-stho vapy anarga-stho gurur eva sada
gatih*

[TRANSLATION] (from the *Āditya-purāṇa*)
"He may be uneducated or he may be learned, yet the spiritual master is the external manifestation of Janārdan, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. And he may remain on the path or he may deviate from the path, still the spiritual master is the [disciple's only] way."

And if it is thus confirmed that one's guru is deviating from the path of devotional service, one may approach him, respectfully question him, and try to keep him fixed on the right path. In the *Kṛṣṇa Bhajanāmṛta* (verse 59) Śrīla Narahari Thākura explains this clearly:

"If a spiritual master commits a wrongful act, breaking Vaisnava regulative principles, one should confront him in a solitary place for his rectification, using logic and appropriate conclusions from sādhu, śāstra, and guru, but one is not to give him up."

Even though the spiritual master has suffered a falldown from the regulative principles he is ordinarily not to be rejected. In this regard Bhakti-vinoda Thākura advises:

"If the guru is not a māvādī or offender to Vaisnavas nor addicted to sinful life, then one should not reject him." (*Jaiva Dharma*, Bengali Original)

In the *Kṛṣṇa Bhajanāmṛta* (Verse 63) Śrīla Narahari Thākura gives advice to a disciple who cannot take direct shelter of his spiritual master due to his being off the proper path of devotional service.

"The authorized course of action is to continue as before with one's prescribed

devotional service. One may take guidance through instructions from the Vaisnavas, for all Vaisnavas are considered guru or spiritual master, or one may use one's own intelligence, duly considering the relevant instructions from sādhu, śāstra, and guru. In all cases one should continue one's devotional service."

Also in this regard Śrīla Jīva Goswami has instructed in the *Bhakti Sandarbha* that connection with a guru who is not properly situated or not giving proper instructions may be maintained, but he should not be closely associated with, but rather respected at a distance. However, if he is actually envious of Vaisnavas, the connection should not be maintained.

*yo vakti nyāya-rahitam
anyanane śṇoti yah
tav ubhau narakam ghoram
vrājataḥ kalam akṣayam*

[TRANSLATION] "He who gives instructions contrary to the principles of devotional service and he who foolishly listens to them will both enter into perpetual hell."

This is stated in the *Nārada Pañcarātra*: "Therefore, such a guru should be worshipped only from a distance [i.e. he should not be closely associated with]. Indeed, if the guru is envious of Vaisnavas one should give him up." (*Bhakti Sandharba* 238)

A spiritual master unable to take his disciples back to Godhead should responsibly advise them to take shelter under someone who can. Actually, Śrīla Prabhupāda advises that a person unable to take his disciple back to Godhead should not act as a guru.

"According to śāstra, the duty of the guru is to take the disciple back home, back to Godhead. If he is unable to do so and instead hinders the disciple in going back-to-Godhead, he should not be a guru . . ." (SB 5.5.18)

When Should the Spiritual Master Be Rejected?

The question remains, "Under what circumstance should a disciple reject his spiritual master?" The GBC resolutions provide that one should abandon or reject a spiritual master who has the following symptoms:

1. His attachment to sense gratification is serious, prolonged or hopeless.
2. He takes on demoniac qualities and becomes inimical to ISKCON.

As Śrīla Prabhupāda has advised:

"According to the revealed scriptures, a teacher or spiritual master is liable to be rejected if he proves himself unworthy of the position of guru or spiritual master" (SB 1.7.43)

According to scriptural codes, a teacher who engages in an abominable action and has lost his sense of discrimination is fit to be abandoned." (*Bhagavad-gītā* 2.5)

"Anyone who is supposed to be a guru but who goes against the principles of viṣṇu-bhakti cannot be accepted as a guru. If one has falsely accepted such a guru, one should reject him. Such a guru is described as follows: (*Mahābhārata*, Udyoga Parva 179.25)

*guror apy avaliptasya
kāryākaryam ajānataḥ
utpatha-pratipannasya
parityāgo vidhīyate*

"Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has advised that such a useless guru, a family priest acting as guru, should be given up, and that the proper, bona fide guru should be accepted" (SB 8.20.1)

The verse from *Mahābhārata* mentioned above by Śrīla Prabhupāda also appears in Śrīla Jīva Goswami's *Bhakti Sandarbha* along with other relevant instructions. And Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura, in both his *Jaiva Dharma* and *Śrī Caitanya*

Sikṣamṛta quotes the same verses as Śrīla Jīva Goswami. The *Mahābhārata* verse "*guror apy avaliptasya*," quoted above by Śrīla Prabhupāda, has been translated in *Jaiva Dharma* into Bengali. That Bengali translation translates into English as follows:

"If the guru becomes attached to sense gratification, loses his sense of duty, and follows a degraded path, a path other than devotional service to the Lord, he should be rejected."

Commenting on this verse, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura says in *Jaiva Dharma* that one may reject the guru when the guru was at the time of one's initiation a Vaisnava conversant in the Absolute Truth, but later, due to bad association, became a māyāvādī or an offender to the Vaisnavas.

Śrīla Narahari Sarkar Thākura, in *Kṛṣṇa-bhajanāmṛta* (verse 64), says that one should renounce the spiritual master if:

"... the spiritual master acts enviously towards that which is connected with the Supreme; is bewildered regarding the Supreme Personality of Godhead ('*īṣvare bhrantaḥ*'); is averse to expanding the fame of Lord Kṛṣṇa; personally refuses to accept hearing or chanting about the glorious pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa, or has become totally bewildered, listening to the false praise of ignorant persons, and day by day is more materially contaminated and fallen."

The Difficulties Faced by Disciples of Fallen Gurus

In the *Nectar of Devotion* Śrīla Prabhupāda presents Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's list of the 64 basic principles for discharging devotional service. The first five are as follows:

1. Accepting the shelter of the lotus feet of a bona fide spiritual master.
2. Becoming initiated by the spiritual master and learning how to discharge devotional service from him.
3. Obeying the orders of the spiritual master with faith and devotion.

4. Following in the footsteps of great ācāryas (teachers) under the direction of the spiritual master.
 5. Inquiring from the spiritual master how to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
- (NOD Chapter 6 page 53)

Śrīla Prabhupāda comments:

“To accept such a spiritual master is the crucial point for advancement in spiritual life. One who is fortunate enough to come under the shelter of a bona fide spiritual master is sure to traverse the path of spiritual salvation without any doubt.” (NOD Chapter 7 pg. 59)

It is clear from this description that the duties of the disciple towards his spiritual master and, indeed, of the spiritual master towards his disciple, are ongoing. A devotee who no longer has the shelter of a bona fide spiritual master therefore suffers a lack in certain aspects of his devotional life:

1. He no longer has the person who served as his immediate link with the paramparā, who accepted his service, and who offered that service through Śrīla Prabhupāda and the disciplic succession to Kṛṣṇa.
2. The spiritual master's promise to take him back to Godhead in return for submission and surrender has been broken.
3. The devotee no longer has the opportunity to inquire from the spiritual master, or to receive from him guidance, correction, and confirmation in his spiritual life.

In these circumstances, it would not be surprising for a devotee to face some difficulties:

- Seeing that his own spiritual master, once revered, has left the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the devotee may suffer a weakening of determination to maintain Śrīla Prabhupāda's standard of sadhana and surrender.
- Since the spiritual master, who seemed so advanced, could not complete the course of

Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the devotee may ask himself, “What hope is there for me?”

- Disappointed by his spiritual master, the devotee may lose faith in serving other senior devotees or accepting instructions from them.
- Since ISKCON at one time approved of his spiritual master, the devotee may lose faith in ISKCON.

The devotees in this situation need tremendous support and encouragement from the society of Vaisnavas; this is perhaps the greatest test of their devotional career. But by the loving association, kindness and warmth within ISKCON they can fortify themselves with renewed enthusiasm. Such devotees should stay faithful to Śrīla Prabhupāda's order, stick firmly to the vows they took at initiation, and continue to serve cooperatively within ISKCON, fixed in their resolve to become pure devotees within Śrīla Prabhupāda's society.

Śrīla Prabhupāda is the Founder-Ācārya of ISKCON and the supreme authority in all matters in the Society. His authoritative books are and will remain the philosophical basis for our movement. Thus he is the pre-eminent śikṣā-guru of all the devotees in ISKCON. Offering him guru-pūjā every day in all our worldwide centers emphasizes this fact. The devotees in ISKCON feel connected to Śrīla Prabhupāda by following his instructions and working cooperatively in his institution.

Nonetheless, to fulfill the ongoing needs of spiritual life, a disciple of a fallen guru should try to develop a sincere relationship with an advanced devotee and receive his mercy. This process of taking shelter of an advanced devotee, as recommended in sāstra, should be a voluntary response to the transcendental knowledge and inspiration one has received from him and the devotional qualities one perceives in him. The process cannot be pressured or forced. It may take time. Faith must develop naturally through hearing and service.

Taking Shelter of an Advanced Devotee

When the ācāryas advise a disciple to reject his spiritual master, they also direct us as to what to do next: accept the shelter of another spiritual master. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura says:

“What should one do if by bad association one’s spiritual master loses his spiritual qualifications? He was prominent as a bona fide spiritual master, but later, by offenses against the holy name, he lost his spiritual discrimination. Becoming offensive and envious towards Vaisnavas, he gave up his taste for the nectar of the holy names of Kṛṣṇa. Thus he gradually came more and more under the control of material desires for profit, sense gratification and illicit sex. The disciple gives up this guru and by the causeless mercy of Lord Kṛṣṇa accepts a bona fide spiritual master again and goes on chanting the pure names of Kṛṣṇa.” (*Harināma Cintāmaṇi*, Chapter 6, Bengali original)

In *Bhakti-sandharbha*, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī discusses the circumstances under which one may reject the spiritual master. He further directs what a devotee in such a situation should do:

“When a guru with appropriate symptoms mentioned earlier [in *Bhakti-sandharbha*] is not present, then constantly serving one advanced devotee is most beneficial. When that advanced devotee is like a bona fide spiritual master in his attitude and is merciful toward one, then one should accept him as spiritual master.” (*Bhakti Sandarbha* 238)

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī also gives details about whom one should approach for shelter: someone in the same spiritual family or line.

yasya yat-sangatih puniso
nanivat syāt sa tad-guṇah
sva-kularddhya tato dhimam
sva-yuthyam eva saṁśrayet

“By associating with a person, one develops his qualities, just as a piece of glass acquires the qualities of a touchstone by coming in touch with it. Therefore one should associate with more advanced devotees from one’s own sampradāya.” (*Bhakti-sandarbha* 238, citing *Harī-Bhakti-Sudhodaya*)

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī’s instructions emphasize the importance of developing a personal relationship with advanced devotees. His words should serve to remind ISKCON devotees that in order for the disciples of fallen gurus to continue serving cooperatively in ISKCON, following Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions, they will need ample encouragement and association from senior Vaisnavas.

A disciple whose initiating guru has fallen may hesitate to accept shelter from another Vaisnava. In this regard Śrīla Naraharī Thākura advises:

“When one takes shelter of the Kṛṣṇa-conscious spiritual master, by the strength of his devotional service the ill effects or contamination of the previous spiritual master who has become contaminated by non-devotional qualities is counteracted and destroyed. These activities [of taking shelter] are recommended by all Vaisnava authorities as the authorized conclusion of the sāstra.” (*Kṛṣṇa Bhajanāmṛta*, verse 66)

What is a Śikṣā Guru?

The spiritual master may be of two kinds: initiating spiritual master (dīkṣā guru) and instructing spiritual master (śikṣā guru). This is explained in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi-līlā, Chapter 1). The dīkṣā-guru is he who gives one both instructions and initiation. But who is a śikṣā-guru? In one sense, a śikṣā guru is any devotee who gives us good instructions. For example, the varṇa-pradarśaka-guru (the devotee who first introduces one into Kṛṣṇa consciousness), as well as a devotee who gives relevant instructions, may be regarded as a kind of śikṣā-guru. Śrīla Prabhupāda once wrote:

“... every Vaisnava should be treated as prabhu, master, higher than me, and in this sense, if I learn from him, he may be regarded as guru.” (Letter to Galim, 11/20/70)

In some cases, however, the relationship with an advanced devotee who gives one instructions may be so profound that it practically equals in depth one’s relationship with the spiritual master from whom one has received initiation.

We should note here that a devotee may accept more than one śikṣā-guru. But one must not do this out of whimsy, or as a device to lessen one's commitment, or to nullify the instructions of one guru by turning to another. We may also note that even devotees whose initiating spiritual master is an advanced devotee in good standing may have a deep relationship with another devotee, who serves as śikṣā-guru. In that case, Śrīla Prabhupāda says,

"It is not that I disobey my real spiritual master and call someone else spiritual master. That is wrong. It is only that I can call spiritual master someone who teaches me purely what my initiating spiritual master has taught." (Letter to Galim, 11/20/71)

Thus we find, for example, that Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavīrāja Gosvāmī ends every chapter of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* by offering obeisances at the lotus feet of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, his instructing spiritual masters.

Similarly, Śrīla Prabhupāda tells us that because of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura's highly elevated spiritual understanding, Gaura Kīṣora dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja always treated him as his spiritual master. Thus Bhaktivinoda Thākura, Śrīla Prabhupāda says, "was like śikṣā guru of Gaura Kīṣora dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja." (Letter to Dayānanda, 5/1/69)

Taking Shelter of a Śikṣā-Guru

When the ācāryas recommend that a disciple whose guru has fallen take shelter of another guru, this indicates that the disciple should submissively approach an advanced devotee, serve him, and be guided by his Kṛṣṇa conscious instructions. Through the relationship established by submissive service and inquiry, one accepts the advanced devotee as his śikṣā-guru. And when one wholeheartedly dedicates oneself to the service of that śikṣā-guru, as much as one would to a dīkṣā-guru, the śikṣā-guru serves as one's link to Kṛṣṇa through the chain of disciplic succession. And at this point the instructing spiritual master may also give one initiation. However, it is Vaisnava etiquette that if a devotee who does have a bona fide dīkṣā-guru wants to accept another Vaisnava as śikṣā-guru, he should first take permission from his dīkṣā-guru.

The Position of Śikṣā-Guru in ISKCON

The GBC envisions the śikṣā-guru as fulfilling an important role in ISKCON—especially for devotees whose initiating spiritual master has fallen. This year (1989), the GBC passed a resolution to take this into account. The resolution provides for the same process of approval for śikṣā-gurus as that of dīkṣā-gurus. In other words, a devotee simply becomes authorized to act as guru in ISKCON and he may act as śikṣā-guru or dīkṣā-guru as he likes. Of course, as mentioned above, any devotee may give relevant instructions, but the formal recognition is an indication that allows devotees to approach such a śikṣā-guru for the complete śikṣā relationship mentioned above.

Can One Take Initiation Again When He

Has Lost His Dīkṣā-Guru?

The question often asked is, "Do the sāstras permit a disciple to accept mantra or initiation again after he has rejected the connection with his initiating guru?" In the *Jaiva Dharma*, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura outlines the causes for rejecting an initiating spiritual master and for accepting mantra again. Parts from this section of *Jaiva Dharma* have been cited earlier, but the complete version is given below to understand more clearly the total context of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura's instructions.

"It is true that the dīkṣā-guru should not be rejected. But there are two instances where one may legitimately reject him:

"First, a disciple may have accepted a spiritual master without thoroughly ascertaining whether the spiritual master was a Vaisnava practically conversant with transcendental knowledge. Later, however, the disciple may realize that the absolute objective will not be accomplished through the instructions of that guru. In that case, the guru should be rejected. There are many items of scriptural evidence in this regard:

yo vakti nyāya-rahitam
anyanena śṛnoti yaḥ
tav ubhau narakam ghoram
vrajataḥ kalam akṣayam

[TRANSLATION by Bhaktivinoda Thākura] "He who gives instructions contrary to the principles of devotional service and he who listens to them will both enter into perpetual hell." (*Nārada Pañcarātra*)

*guror apy avaliptasya
karyākaryam ajānataḥ
utpatha-pratipannasya
parityāgo vidhiyate*

[TRANSLATION by Bhaktivinoda Thākura] "If the guru becomes attached to sense gratification, loses his sense of duty, and follows a degraded path, a path other than devotional service to the Lord, he should be rejected." (*Mahābhārata*, Udyog 179.25)

*avaishnavopadiṣṭena
mantraṇa nūrayam vrajet
punaś ca vidhinā samyak
grāhayet vaiṣṇavād guroḥ*

[TRANSLATION by Bhaktivinoda Thākura] "If one receives a mantra from an avaisnava, one illicitly connected with women or a non-devotee devoid of attachment to Kṛṣṇa, one goes to hell. Therefore, one will take his mantra again from a Vaisnava guru according to scriptural rules." (*Nārada Pañcarātra*)

"The second instance in which one may reject the guru is when the guru was at the time of one's initiation a Vaisnava conversant in the Absolute Truth but later due to bad association became a māvāvadī or an offender to the Vaisnavas. That guru should be rejected. If the guru is not a māvāvadī or offender to Vaisnavas nor addicted to sinful life, then one should not reject him even if he has a lack of knowledge. Rather, showing him due respect, with his permission, one should take spiritual instructions from an advanced devotee and serve that devotee properly. (*Jaiva*

Dharma Chapter 20, Bengali original, page 353)

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura further elaborates as follows in the *Śrī Caitanya Śikṣāmṛta*:

"If the spiritual master is definitely envious against the Vaisnavas or a pure devotee, then he should be rejected and a qualified devotee should be accepted as spiritual master." (*Śrī Caitanya Śikṣāmṛta*, Bengali original page 172)

Then, as in *Jaiva Dharma*, here also, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura, in a footnote, cites the same aforementioned three scriptural verses, along with Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's verse stating that one should reject a guru if he is envious of Vaisnavas. In the *Jaiva Dharma*'s Bengali translation of the "avaishnavopadiṣṭena . . ." verse, "avaishnava" has been specifically defined as "one illicitly connected with women or a non-devotee devoid of attachment to Kṛṣṇa." This verse prescribes that "one will take his mantra again from a Vaisnava guru according to scriptural rules."

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī further states: "that one who is devoid of the Vaisnava attitude is [also] to be considered a non-Vaisnava (and therefore the recommendations given by the *avaishnavopadiṣṭena*" verse should be applied to him)." (*Bhakti-sandarbhā* verse 238)

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī also quotes the same three scriptural references: "yo vakti nyāya-rahitam . . .", "guror apy avaliptasya," and "avaishnavopadiṣṭena," adding that:

"When a guru with appropriate symptoms mentioned earlier [in *Bhakti-sandarbhā*] is not present, then constantly serving one advanced devotee is most beneficial. When that advanced devotee is like a bona fide spiritual master in his attitude and is merciful toward one, then one should accept him as spiritual master." (*Bhakti Sandarbha* 238)

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī also quotes the following verse:

*yasya yat-saṁgatih puṁso
manivat syāt sa tad-guṇaḥ
sva-kularddhyai tato dhiman
sva-yuṭhyan eva saṁsrayet*

[TRANSLATION] "By associating with a person, one develops his qualities, just as a piece of glass acquires the qualities of a touchstone by coming in touch with it. Therefore one should associate with more advanced devotees from one's own sampradāya." (This verse is found in the *Hari-Bhakti-Sudhodaya*.)

"If that advanced devotee is not merciful toward one, one will not develop a worshipful attitude toward him." (*Bhakti-sandarbhā* 238)

In conclusion, our previous ācāryas recommend that a devotee who has lost his initiating guru should take shelter of an advanced devotee as his śikṣā-guru. Later he may wish to confirm his dedication and commitment to Śrīla Prabhupāda and his sampradāya, and he may request to receive his mantras again and confirm his vows before the guru, who also formally accepts the eternal responsibility of sheltering the disciple and bringing him back to Godhead. Thus accepting formal initiation from the guru brings the disciple and guru closer together, confirming and strengthening their relationship and that with the disciplic succession.

Summary

Śrīla Prabhupāda is the Founder-Ācārya of ISKCON and will always be the pre-eminent śikṣā-

guru for all the members of the society. The process of devotional service requires that one surrender to a bona fide spiritual master and accept dīkṣā from him. Devotees should take shelter of the representatives of Śrīla Prabhupāda who are the current link in the disciplic succession.

Should circumstances require that one reject one's spiritual master, one should continue to serve other advanced devotees in ISKCON. The instructions and examples of these advanced devotees will encourage one in his progress in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. As one's faith and commitment develops the devotee may place himself under the shelter of an advanced devotee whom he accepts as his śikṣā-guru. Thus one can advance quickly, overcoming all obstacles in the path of devotional service. And as the relationship with the instructing spiritual master develops through service, surrender, and submissive hearing, in due course, through the agreement between the guru and the disciple, one may take initiation again.

In no circumstances should the guru-disciple relationship be forced upon one. It must be allowed to develop naturally. All devotees should sincerely pray to Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrī Kṛṣṇa for their guidance and mercy in this regard.

We hope that this paper will serve to clarify some aspects of the guru-disciple relationship and to encourage devotees to genuinely develop that relationship. Such matters cannot be legislated, but the advice contained herein represents the recommended and safe process for our steady progress back to Godhead.

All glories to Śrī Guru and Gaurāṅga!

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT REINITIATION

A paper to offer guidance from the GBC

March 2, 1990

QUESTION 1. Can a devotee who is not directly Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciple take shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda and make progress in Kṛṣṇa consciousness?

ANSWER:

Yes. *Anyone* can take shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda and by his mercy make Kṛṣṇa-conscious progress. As soon as one reads from Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, comes in touch with Śrīla Prabhupāda's Society, or becomes attracted to Śrīla Prabhupāda or his teachings, one gets Śrīla Prabhupāda's mercy. And the more one faithfully follows Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions, the more one makes progress on the path back home, back to Godhead.

QUESTION 2. Can a devotee in need of a guru fully meet this need simply by accepting Śrīla Prabhupāda as his guru?

ANSWER:

No, that is not what Śrīla Prabhupāda taught. Of course, everyone should follow Śrīla Prabhupāda. But to follow Śrīla Prabhupāda properly and completely, those who are not his initiated disciples should follow his instruction to seek a bona fide spiritual master, take initiation from him, inquire from him, surrender to him, and serve him. As Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (2.9.7), "In order to receive the real message of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* one should approach the *current link* in the chain of disciplic succession." (emphasis supplied)

Now that Śrīla Prabhupāda is physically no longer present, those who wish to follow in his line should become disciples of his disciples in the paramparā system.

QUESTION 3. If one's guru performs some wrongful act, breaking Vaiṣṇava regulative principles, what should one do?

ANSWER:

According to *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Bhajanāmṛta*, in such a case one should personally confront the spiritual master and appeal for his rectification, but one should not give him up.

One should take shelter of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and continue in one's prescribed devotional service in the association of devotees.

One should be guided by the bona fide instructions of the guru, or one should use one's own intelligence, considering the relevant instructions from sādhu, guru, and śāstra.

In all cases, one should continue in one's devotional service.

(The relevant text from *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Bhajanāmṛta* is included in an appendix to this paper.)

QUESTION 4. But what if the guru gives up being a devotee, becomes an impersonalist, becomes an offender to devotees, or becomes addicted to sinful life?

ANSWER:

If the initiating guru falls so deeply that he gives up the Vaiṣṇava mentality, offends the Vaiṣṇavas, adopts a bogus philosophy, or goes on repeatedly performing sinful acts—yes, one must reject him and take reinitiation.

Explanation:

Fortunately, the crux of this issue has been clarified for us by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura in his *Jaiva Dharma* and by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī in his *Bhakti Sandarbha*. Their statements on this matter appear in the appendices to this paper.

To make smooth and steady progress in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we need to come under the discipline

and guidance of a bona fide spiritual master. And if circumstances oblige us to reject the spiritual master from whom we have received initiation, we must come under the shelter of another.

But Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī indicates that the process of accepting another spiritual master should naturally unfold. A person who finds himself without a spiritual master should seek one advanced devotee and serve him (*nityam bhāgavata sevaya*). By rendering service to the advanced devotee, one's heart will be cleansed of confusion. And when a relationship of service and mercy matures, one should accept the advanced devotee as one's spiritual master.

QUESTION 5. If one has been initiated by a Vaisnava guru but that guru, though not fallen, is unable to give adequate Kṛṣṇa conscious instructions, does one need to reject him and seek reinitiation?

ANSWER:

No. Śrīla Bhaktinoda Thākura advises that in such a circumstance one should not reject the guru, even if the guru has a lack of knowledge. Rather, showing him due respect, with his permission one should take spiritual instructions from an advanced devotee and serve that devotee properly.

QUESTION 6. How should a disciple determine whether his guru has fallen so seriously that the guru should be rejected?

ANSWER:

Śrīla Narottama dāsa Thākura advises us to follow the instructions of guru, sādhu, and śāstra. And even if the guru has fallen, the help of sādhu and śāstra are still with us.

So we should be guided by Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions, with help from advanced devotees.

One should be careful never to reject a spiritual master whimsically. The members of ISKCON should follow the instructions of the scriptures under the guidance of well-situated devotees and the GBC.

QUESTION 7. If one needs to be reinitiated, how soon should one accept reinitiation?

ANSWER:

Only as soon as one develops sufficient faith in an advanced devotee.

One who finds an advanced devotee in whom one has confidence should serve him submissively and inquire from him. And that devotee may reciprocate one's service, acting in the mood of a bona fide spiritual master.

After one has considered the qualities of such an advanced devotee for one year or more and one's faith in him has sufficiently developed, one should surrender to him and accept him as one's spiritual master.

If one serves Kṛṣṇa seriously and sincerely, Kṛṣṇa will reveal everything in due time.

QUESTION 8. If the disciple of a fallen guru develops a śikṣā guru relationship with a senior devotee within ISKCON, can that relationship be strong enough to obviate the need for formal dīkṣā?

ANSWER:

One should not think that a relationship with a śikṣā-guru does away with the need for initiation. Wherever the *ācāryas* have prescribed reinitiation, we should follow their prescription.

Still, we should note that the essence of initiation consists not of the formalities but of the disciple's eternal commitment to serving the guru and of the guru's commitment to delivering the disciple. In that sense, if one's relationship with a śikṣā-guru is sufficiently deep, the initiation ceremonies seal a relationship that already exists.

As Narottama dāsa Thākura says, *caṅṣu-dān dilo yei, janme janme prabhu sei*: "He who has opened my eyes—he is my master, birth after birth."

As conditioned souls, we generally require the prescribed formalities to foster this commitment.

In the Gaudīya tradition, initiation may sometimes take place even without a fire sacrifice or other rituals or formalities. For example, Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu initiated Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī with no other formalities than changing their names.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, however, initiated his disciples with a fire sacrifice and other formal procedures. This is the standard he set for ISKCON. So this is the standard we should follow.

QUESTION 9. If the guru falls, what happens to the mantra one has received from him? Does it become impotent? Does it become polluted? If the guru was fallen at the time of one's initiation, does it mean that one never factually received the mantra?

ANSWER:

The Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra is always potent (*nāma cintāmaṇi kṛṣṇas caitanya rasa-vigraha*). The Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa Himself. So everyone who chants Hare Kṛṣṇa will benefit. Thousands of people benefit by hearing or chanting with our kīrtana parties and festivals on the street. And what to speak of devotees who join ISKCON? They chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and render devotional service with enthusiasm even *before* they receive initiation.

We should understand that these devotees are making progress in devotional life by following the principles of sādhaṇa in the association of devotees. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said that five principles of devotional life are extremely potent: association with devotees, serving the Deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa, hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, and living in Vṛndāvana (or a Kṛṣṇa-conscious place on the level of Vṛndāvana). These five principles are the life of ISKCON, so naturally anyone who lives in ISKCON can easily make spiritual advancement.

But to be properly connected with Kṛṣṇa and get the full benefit of chanting, a connection with a bona fide spiritual master is required.

QUESTION 10. If the guru has fallen, has one's connection with the disciplic succession actually broken?

ANSWER:

When one lives within ISKCON one comes under the shelter of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, under the shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and under the shelter of the community of devotees. So all the sincere devotees within ISKCON are living under the shelter of the ISKCON sampradāya.

Sampradāya means "spiritual community." Even if a spiritual master falls, the ISKCON community goes on, giving shelter to all the devotees within it.

But to be fully and properly situated in the system of *paramparā*, disciplic succession, we need a bona fide spiritual master.

If the spiritual master is fallen, how can that fallen person represent the disciplic succession of pure devotees?

In Śrīla Prabhupāda's words, the guru is the "transparent via medium" to Kṛṣṇa. But when the guru ceases to follow the orders of his spiritual master, he ceases to be transparent. So now we should link with a qualified spiritual master so that our connection will be strong, complete, and proper.

QUESTION 11. We've seen devotees doing well in devotional service even though initiated by a guru who was fallen. In some cases the guru was fallen at the time of their initiation, but still the devotees are doing well. If their initiation is invalid, how do you explain this?

ANSWER:

See the answer to Question 9.

QUESTION 12. Upon whom should the disciple of a fallen guru meditate when chanting the gāyatrī mantras directed toward the guru?

ANSWER:

If one's guru has fallen, one should eventually take shelter of another guru, as described above. And while chanting the gāyatrī mantra, or other mantras to the guru, one should meditate on him.

But meanwhile, in the interim, *before* one has taken shelter of another spiritual master, what should one do?

Our answer here is that this constitutes a special, emergency situation. In this circumstance one may meditate on Śrīla Prabhupāda. Having lost one's spiritual master, one may pray to Śrīla Prabhupāda, "Please help me get a bona fide guru to maintain my connection with you in devotional service."

QUESTION 13. Can the disciple of a fallen guru serve as a qualified brāhmaṇa to make offerings to Śrī Kṛṣṇa?

ANSWER:

The answer to this question is implicit in our answer to the previous question: In this special circumstance, yes.

QUESTION 14. What if one's spiritual master falls from devotional service, his disciples reject him, but considerably later he comes back?

ANSWER:

The GBC body expects that if a guru falls and considerably later comes back, as a humble Vaisnava he will not place claims on his former disciples.

That former guru, by his own deviations, has broken the guru-disciple relationship, and the disciple has legitimately rejected him. So even should the guru return, the former disciple's obligations to him no longer exist.

Apart from this, the GBC body holds that a guru who has been formally removed by the GBC must permanently forfeit all claims to his former disciples.

QUESTION 15. Can the disciple of a fallen guru give dīksā? If so, what is that disciple's link with the disciplic succession?

ANSWER:

First of all, we should understand that, unless the spiritual master explicitly directs otherwise, a disciple can give dīksā only after his spiritual master departs this mortal world.

Now, if one's guru falls but is not envious, addicted to sinful life, or offensive to Vaisnavas, the disciple will seek shelter of a śikṣā guru. And if the disciple later initiates, the disciplic succession will trace back through that śikṣā guru.

If, on the other hand, one's guru leaves devotional service entirely or is envious, addicted to sins, or offensive, the disciple will need to receive dīksā again. And if that disciple later initiates, the disciplic succession will trace back through the spiritual master who gave dīksā the second time.

Finally, an important note:

In accepting initiation or reinitiation, the relationship the disciple seeks to establish with his guru should be the same guru-disciple relationship described in all of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books.

APPENDIX 1

Quotation from Śrī Kṛṣṇa Bhajanāmṛta

Our paper makes the point that a spiritual master who accidentally falls from the standard of strict devotional service but quickly rectifies himself should not be rejected. The relevant text, from Śrī Narahari Sarkāra's *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Bhajanāmṛta*, is as follows.

If a spiritual master commits a wrongful act, one should privately confront him for his rectification, using logically presented conclusions from śāstra, but one is not to give him up. (59)

If one thinks one shouldn't reprimand a spiritual master, one should consider this statement: "If the guru becomes attached to sense gratification, loses his sense of duty, and follows a degraded path, a path other than devotional service to the Lord, he should be restrained or reprimanded with logical arguments." (60)

With this understanding, everything becomes auspicious. (61)

The natural behavior of Vaiṣṇava devotees is to take complete refuge of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, accepting Him as their real and principal shelter. Their very life is to sing His glories, describe and expand His fame, and discuss the nectar of His transcendental pastimes. (62)

Therefore, following this devotional nature, all devotees continue their regular devotional service. Guided by the bona fide

instructions of the guru or by one's own intelligence, in all cases one should continue in one's devotional service. This is the authorized course. (63)

But if the spiritual master commits improprieties, is bewildered about the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is averse to expanding Lord Kṛṣṇa's glories, personally refuses to hear or chant about the pastimes of the Lord, or has become utterly puffed up by the false praises of ignorant persons and thus falls into darkness, then the spiritual master is simply to be rejected. (64)

Under those circumstances one should not think, "How can I give up my spiritual master?" With a strong desire to achieve spontaneous devotional service and attain the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa, a devotee accepts the shelter of a spiritual master. But if after that the spiritual master takes on a demonic mentality, what is to be done? Rejecting such a demonic guru, in his place one should accept a Kṛṣṇa conscious spiritual master and worship him. (65)

By the strength of the devotional service of the Kṛṣṇa conscious spiritual master, the ill effects of the demonic spiritual master are destroyed. This is the authorized way of Vaisnava devotional service. (66)

During the appearance of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu many examples of this were seen. (67)

APPENDIX 2

Quotations from Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura and Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura writes in his *Jaiva Dharma*:

It is true that the dīksā guru should not be rejected. But there are two instances where one may legitimately reject him.

First, a disciple may have accepted a spiritual master without thoroughly ascertaining whether the spiritual master was a Vaisnava practically conversant with transcendental knowledge. Later, however, the disciple may realize that the absolute objective will not be accomplished through the instructions of that guru. In that case, the guru should be rejected. There are many items of scriptural evidence in this regard.¹

*yo vakti nyāya-rahitam
anyayena śṛnoti yah
tav ubhau narakam ghoram
vrajataḥ kalam akṣayam*

“One who (in the guise of an ācārya) gives unauthorized instructions detrimental to scriptural injunctions and one who (as a disciple) listens to those instructions will enter into hell eternally.” [Nārada Pañcarātra]

*guror apy avaliptasya
kāryākaryam ajānataḥ
utpatha-pratipannasya
parityāgo vidhīyate*

“If the guru becomes attached to sense gratification, loses his sense of duty, and follows a degraded path, a path other than

devotional service to the Lord, he should be rejected.” [Mahābhārata, Udyoga Parva 179.25]

*avaiṣṇavopadiṣṭena
mantreṇa nirayaṁ vrajet
punaś ca vidhinā samyak
grāhayet vaiṣṇavad guroḥ*

“If one receives a mantra from an avaiṣṇava illicitly connected with women and devoid of attachment to Kṛṣṇa, one goes to hell. Therefore, one must take reinitiation from a Vaisnava guru according to scriptural rules.”² [Nārada Pañcarātra]

The second instance in which one may reject the guru is when the guru was at the time of one's initiation a Vaisnava conversant in the Absolute Truth but later due to bad association became a māyāvādī or an offender to the Vaisnavas. That guru should be rejected. If the guru is not a māyāvādī or offender to Vaisnavas nor addicted to sinful life, then one should not reject him even if he has a lack of knowledge. Rather, showing him due respect, with his permission one should take spiritual instructions from an advanced devotee and serve that devotee properly.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, in his *Bhakti Sandarbha*, discusses the same three verses.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī says:

At first one may have taken shelter of a guru who did not have the symptoms previously

¹ Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura translates these Sanskrit verses into Bengali. Bhakti Caru Mahārāja here translates Bhaktivinoda Thākura's Bengali into English. The parenthetical additions appear in parentheses in the Bengali.

² The words *punaś ca* directly indicate that one should accept initiation again. This is confirmed by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura, who translates this verse into Bengali using the words *punaraya mantra grahan koribe*, “one must accept the mantra again.”

mentioned [in *Bhakti Sandarbha*], such as 'sābde pare ca niṣṭatam' [Srimad-Bhagavatam 11.3.21]. And now, because the guru is envious and contaminated, one does not receive permission from him to serve an advanced devotee. Thus the guru has made trouble for the disciple in both ways. The unqualified guru, then [and not the disciple], has been the first to violate the injunctions of the scriptures, and that guru should not be considered

*yo vakti nyāya-rahitam
anyayena śṛṇoti yaḥ
taṁ ubhau narakam ghoram
vrajataḥ kalam akṣayam*

"He who gives [such] foolish instructions and he who listens to them will both enter into perpetual hell."

This is stated in the *Nārada Pañcarātra*. Therefore, such a guru should be worshiped only from a distance. Indeed, if the guru is envious of Vaisnavas one should give him up.

*guror apy avaliptasya
kāryākaryam ajānataḥ
utpatha-pratipannasya
parityāgo vidhiyate*

"If the guru becomes attached to sense gratification, loses his sense of duty, and follows a degraded path, a path other than devotional service to the Lord, he should be rejected" [Mahābhārata]

As stated in *smṛti* [in this verse from *Mahabharata*], when one finds that the guru is bereft of the Vaisnava mentality and showing instead the qualities of a nondevotee, one should consider him the *avaisnava* mentioned in the verse *avaisnavopadistena* [Here Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī refers to the verse that says one should reject such an *avaisnava* guru and accept reinitiation.]

If one finds himself without a guru with the good qualifications previously described, one should find one advanced devotee and serve him constantly, and that will give one the highest benefit. And if that advanced devotee is merciful toward him and desires to reciprocate, acting like a bona fide spiritual master in his attitude, then one should accept him:

*yasya yat-samgatih puṁso
manivat syāt sa tad-guṇaḥ
sva-kularddhyaḥ tato dhīman
sva-yuthyan eva saṁsrayet*

"By associating with a person, one develops his qualities, just as a piece of glass acquires the qualities of a touchstone by coming in touch with it. Therefore an intelligent person, for the sake of his own spiritual community, should associate with more advanced devotees from his own sampradāya."

This verse is found in the *Hari-Bhakti-Sudhodaya*. If that advanced devotee is not merciful toward one, one will not develop a worshipful attitude toward him.

APPENDIX 3

The portion of *Srī Kṛṣṇa Bhajanāmṛta* quoted in this paper is transliterated here, with word-for-word meanings given by Śrīpāda Hṛdayānanda dāsa Gosvāmī

*kintu yadi gurur asamanjasam karoti tarhi yukti
siddhah
siddhantais tasya rahasi dandah karaniyo na tu
tyajyah (59)*

kintu—however; *yadi*—if; *guruh*—the guru; *asamanjasa*—a wrongful act; *karoti*—commits; *tarhi*—thereupon; *yukti*—with logic and reason; *siddhah*—made perfect; *siddhantaih*—with the conclusions of scriptures; *tasya*—of him; *rahasi*—privately; *dandah*—reprimand, restraining; *karaniyah*—is to be done; *na*—not; *tu*—but; *tyajyah*—to be given up. (59)

*gurur danda iti cenna
guror apy avaliptasya karyakaryam ajanatah
utpatha pratipannasya nyayo dando vidhiyate
(60)*

guruh—of the guru; *dandah*—reprimand; *iti*—thus; *cet*—if; *na*—(one considers should) not (be done); *guror api*—even of a guru; *avaliptasya*—proud and contaminated; *karya-akaryam*—what is to be done and what is not to be done; *ajanatah*—who does not know; *utpatha*—the wrong path; *pratipannasya*—who has taken to; *nyayah*—reason; *dandah*—reprimand, restraining; *vidhiyate*—is enjoined. (60)

anena sarvam susobhanam iti (61)

anena—with this (understanding); *sarvam*—everything; *susobhanam*—(becomes) very beautiful, auspicious; *iti*—thus. (61)

*svabhava eva vaisnavanam kṛṣṇasraya eva
mulam tad guna gana
yaso-varnana-vilasa-vinoda-prakhyapanam
jivanam (62)*

svabhavah—the nature; *eva*—certainly; *vaisnavanam*—of devotees; *kṛṣṇa-asrayah*—to

take shelter of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa; *eva*—alone; *mulam*—the foundation, basis; *tad-guna*—this (Lord Kṛṣṇa's) qualities; *gana*—singing; *yaso*—glories; *varnana*—describing; *vilasa*—of the pastimes; *vinoda-prakhyapanam*—spreading the news; *jivanam*—the very life. (62)

*vaisnavah sarve tad anusaram eva gurumukhat
va sva-buddhya va vyavaharanti iti kramah (63)*

vaisnavah—the devotees; *sarve*—all; *tad-anusaram*—following this (nature); *eva*—only; *guru-mukhat*—from the mouth of the guru; *va*—either; *sva-buddhya*—by one's own intelligence; *va*—or; *vyavaharanti*—perform the regular (devotional) activities; *iti*—thus; *kramah*—the process. (63)

*tatra gurur yadi visadsakari isvare bhrantah
kṛṣṇa yaso vimukho vilasa-vinodam na
angikaroti svayam va durabhimani loka-stavaih
kṛṣṇatvam prapnoti tarhi tyajya eva. (64)*

tatra—in this matter; *guruh*—the guru; *yadi*—if; *vi-sadrsa*—improprieties; *kari*—commits; *isvare*—about the Lord; *bhrantah*—bewildered; *kṛṣṇa-yaso*—the glories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa; *vimukha*—against; *vilasa*—pastimes (of Kṛṣṇa); *vinodam*—relishing; *na*—does not; *angikaroti*—accept; *svayam*—personally; *va*—or; *durabhimani*—terribly conceited; *loka-stavaih*—by the praises and flattery of the public; *kṛṣṇatvam*—darkness; *prapnoti*—comes to; *tarhi*—then; *tyajyah*—to be rejected; *eva*—simply. (64)

*katham eva gurus tyajya iti no, kṛṣṇa-bhava-
lobhat kṛṣṇa-praptaye guror asrayah kṛtas tad-
anantaram yadi tasmin gurau asuribhavas tarhi
kim kartavyam asura-gurum tyaktva sri kṛṣṇa-
bhaktimantam gurum anyam bhajet. (65)*

katham—how (is it possible); *eva*—indeed; *guruh*—the guru; *tyajyah*—is to be rejected; *iti*—thus; *no*—(if one thinks) not; *kṛṣṇa-bhava-lobhat*—out of eagerness for Śrī Kṛṣṇa's transcendental nature; *kṛṣṇa-praptaye*—to achieve

Sri Kṛṣṇa: *guroh*—of a guru; *asrayah kṛtāh*—one took shelter; *tad-anantaram*—after that; *yadi*—if; *tasmin gurau*—in that guru; *asuri-bhavaḥ*—the demonic nature; *tarhi*—then; *kim kartavyam*—what is to be done; *asura-gurum*—the asura guru; *tyaktva*—rejecting; *sri kṛṣṇa-bhaktimantam*—full of devotion for Śrī Kṛṣṇa; *gurum*—guru; *anyam*—another; *bhajeṭ*—one should accept and worship. (65)

tasya kṛṣṇa-balad asurasya guror balam mardaniyam iti vaiṣṇava-bhājana-vicarah (66)

tasya—his; *kṛṣṇa-balat*—by strength derived from Lord Kṛṣṇa; *asurasya guroh*—of the asura guru; *balam*—the strength, influence; *mardaniyam*—is to be smashed, destroyed; *iti*—thus; *vaiṣṇava-bhājana*—(the way of) serving and accepting Vaiṣṇavas; *vicarah*—the correct analysis of (66)

evam tu drṣṭa bahavaḥ sri kṛṣṇa caitanyavatare (67)

evam—thus; *tu*—indeed; *drṣṭaḥ*—have been seen; *bahavaḥ*—many (cases); *sri-kṛṣṇa-caitanya-avatare*—during the appearance of Lord Caitanya. (67)

APPENDIX 4

The text of the section from *Jaiva Dharma* quoted in the paper is transliterated here, with word-for-word meanings given by Sripada Bhakti Caru Swami

*diksa guru apartiyajya bate, kintu duiti karane
tini parityajya hoite parena. sisya yakhan guru-
varana kariyachilena. takhana yadi tattvajna o
vaisnava guru pariksa na kariya thakena, taha
hoile karyakale sei gurura dvara kona karya haya
na boliya tanhake parityaga karite haya. ihara
bahutara sastra-pramana ache; yatha*

*sri-narada-pancaratire—“yo vakti nyaya-
rahitam anyayena srnoti yah tav ubhau narakam
ghoram vrajatah kalam aksayam”*

*jini (acarya-vese) anyaya arthat satvat-sastra-
virodhi katha kirtana karena evam jini (sisya-
rupe) anyaya bhabe taha sravana karena,
tanhara ubhayera ananta-kala ghora narake
gamana karena*

*“gurur apy avaliptasya karyakaryam
ajanatah utpatha-pratipannasya parityago
vidhiyate”*

*bhogya-visaya-lipta, kimkartavya-vimudha evam
bhakti hyatit itar panthanugami byakti guru
hoileo parityaga karibe.*

*“avaishnavopadistena mantrena nirayam
vrajat punas ca vidhina samyak grahayet
vaisnavad guroh”*

*stri-sangi o krsna-abhakta avaisnavera upadista
mantra labha karile naraka gamana haya. ataeva
yatha-sastra punaraya vaisnava-gurura nikata
mantra grahana karibe.*

*dvitiya karana ei ye. guru-varana samaye
gurudeva vaisnava o tattvajna chilena, kintu
sanga-dose pare mayavadi va vaisnava-vidvesi
hoiya jan; erupa guruke partyaga kara kartavya;
grhita guru yadi mayavadi va vaisnava-vidvesi va
papasakta na han, tabe tanhake alpa-jnana-
prayukta parityaga kara ucita naya, se sthale
tanhake guru-sanmanera sahita tanhara anumati
loiya anya bhagavata-janera yathayatha*

*sevapurvaka tanhara nikata hoite tattva-siksa
karibe.*

*diksa-guru—initiating spiritual master.
aparityajya—not to be rejected; bate—indeed;
kintu—but; duiti—two; karane—reasons; tini—he;
parityajya—rejectable; hoite parena—can be;
sisya—disciple; yakhan—when; guru
varan—accepting a spiritual master;
kariyachilena—did; thakan—then; yadi—if;
tattvajna—one who has knowledge about the
spiritual reality; o—and; vaisnava-guru—Vaisnava
spiritual master; pariksa—test, examination;
na—not; kariya—doing; thakena—did; taha
hoile—then; karyakale—in due course of time;
sei—that; gurura dvara—by that guru; kona—any;
karya—work, purpose; haya na—does not happen;
boliya—because; tanhake—him;
parityaga—reject; karite haya—should; ihara—of
this; bahutara—much; sastra pramana—scriptural
evidence; ache—there is; yatha—for example.
sri-narada-pancaratire—in Sri Narada
Pancaratra.*

*“yo vakti nyaya-rahitam anyayena srnoti yah
tav ubhau narakam ghoram vrajatah kalam
aksayam”*

*jini—one who; acarya vese—in the guise of an
acarya; anyaya—wrong; arthat—that is; sarvata-
sastra-virodhi—detrimental to the scriptures in the
mode of goodness; katha—instructions; kirtana
karena—teaches; evam—and; jini—one who; sisya
rupe—as a disciple; anyaya bhabe—wrongly; —
taha—that; sravana karena—listens; tanhara
ubhayera—both of them; ananta-kala—for
endless time; ghora—dreadful; narake—in hell;
gamana karena—enter, go*

*“gurur apy avaliptasya karyakaryam
ajanatah utpatha-pratipannasya
parityago vidhiyate”*

*bhogya-visaya-lipta—absorbed in sense
gratification; kimkartavya-vimudha—bewildered;
evam—and; bhakti vyantā—other than devotion;
itar—inferior; panthanugami—a follower of the*

path; *vyakti*—person; *guru hoileo*—even if he is a guru; *parityaga*—reject; *karibe*—one should.

"*avaisnavopadistena mantrena nirayam
vrajat punas ca vidhina samyak grahavyet
vaisnavad guroh*"

stri-sangi—one who associates with women;
o—and; *krsna-abhakta*—who is not a devotee of Krsna; *avaisnavera*—of a nondevotee;
upadista—instructed; *mantra*—a mantra; *labha karile*—if one receives; *naraka*—hell; *gamana haya*—goes; *ataeva*—therefore; *yatha-sastra*—according to the scriptures;
punaraya—again; *vaisnava-gurura*—a Vaisnava spiritual master; *nikata*—from; *mantra*—mantra; *grahana karibe*—one should receive.

dvitiya—second; *karana*—cause; *ei ye*—is; *guru-varana samaye*—at the time of accepting the spiritual master; *gurudeva*—the spiritual master; *vaisnava*—Vaisnava; *o*—and; *tattvajna*—one who

has knowledge about the spiritual reality; *chilena*—was; *kintu*—but; *sanga-dose*—due to bad association; *pare*—afterwards.

mayavadi—impersonalist; *va*—or; *vaisnava-vidvesi*—offensive to Vaisnavas; *hoiya jan*—became; *erape*—in this way; *guruke*—to the guru; *parityaga*—reject; *kara kartavya*—is a must; *grhita*—accepted; *guru*—spiritual master; *yadi*—if; *mayavadi*—impersonalist; *va*—or; *vaisnava-vidvesi*—offensive to Vaisnavas; *va*—or; *papasakta*—attached to sinful life; *na han*—is not; *tabe*—then; *tanhake*—him; *alpa-jnana-prayukta*—due to his lack of knowledge; *parityaga*—reject; *kara ucita naya*—should not; *se sthale*—in that case; *tanhake*—him; *guru-sanmanera sahita*—with appropriate respect for a guru; *tanhara anumati loiya*—with his permission; *anya bhagavata-janera*—of another advanced devotee; *yathayatha*—appropriate; *sevapurvaka*—rendering service; *tanhara nikata hoite*—from him; *tattva-siksa karibe*—one should learn the spiritual science.

APPENDIX 5

The portion of *Bhakti Sandarbha* quoted in this paper is transliterated here, with word-for-word meanings by Sripada Hridayananda dasa Gosvami.

yah prathamam "sabde pare ca nisnatam" ity-
ady-ukta-laksanam gurum nasritavan, tadsa-
guros ca matsaradito maha-bhagavata-
satkaradav anumatim na labhate, sa prathamata
eva tyakta-sastro na vicaryate. ubhaya-sankata-
pato hi tasmin bhavaty eva. evam-
adhikabhiprayenaiva—

yo vakti nyaya-rahitam
anyayena srnoti yah
tav ubhau narakam ghoram
vrajatah kalam aksayam

iti sri narada-pancaratne. ata eva durata
evaradhyas tadsa guruh; vaisnava-dvesi cet
parityajya eva—

guror apy avaliptasya
karyakaryam ajanatah
utpatha-pratipannasya
parityago vidhiyate

iti smaranat, tasya vaisnava-bhava-
rahityenavaishnavataya "avaishnavopadistena" ity-
adi-vacana-visayatvac ca,

yathokta-laksanasya sri-guror avidyamanatayam
tu tasyaiva maha-bhagavatasyaikasya nitya-
sevanam paramam sreyah. sa ca sri-guruvat
sama-vasanah svasmin krpalu-cittas ca
grahyah—

yasya yat-samgatih pumso
manivat syat sa tad-gunah
sva-kularddhyai tato dhiman
sva-yuthyan eva samsrayet

iti sri hari-bhakti-sudhodaya-drstya
krpam vina tasmin cittaratya ca

yah—one who; prathamam—first; "sabde pare ca
nisnatam"—in the verse tasmad gurum prapadyeta
etc.; iti—thus; adi—etc.; ukta—stated;

laksanam—with qualities; gurum—a spiritual
master; na—not; asritavan—has taken shelter;
tadsa-guruh—of such a spiritual master;
ca—also; matsara-aditah—by envy etc.;
maha-bhagavata—a great devotee; sat-kara—to
honor and serve; adau—etc.;
anumatim—permission; na labhate—does not get;
sah—he; prathamatah—at first; eva—actually;
tyakta-sastrah—has given up sastra; na—not;
vicaryate—(he) should be considered; ubhaya—on
both sides; sankata—of trouble; patah-occurrence;
hi—certainly; tasmin—in him (the guru);
bhavati—there is; eva—actually; evam—thus;
adika—etc.; abhiprayena—by this purpose and
meaning; eva—in fact.

yah—one who; vakti—speaks; nyaya—right and
good sense; rahitam—that which is devoid of;
anyayena—improperly; srnoti—hears; yah—one
who; tau—the two; ubhau—both; narakam—to
hell; ghoram—terrible; vrajatah—they go;
kalam—time; aksayam—unending.

iti—thus; sri narada-pancaratne—in the scripture
of the name; ata eva—therefore; durata—at a
distance; eva—only; aradhyah—to be worshiped;
tadsa guruh—such a spiritual master;
vaisnava-vidvesi—inimical to the devotees;
cet—if; parityajah—to be renounced;
eva—simply.

guror api—even of a guru; avaliptasya—proud
and contaminated; karya-akaryam—what is to be
done and what is not to be done; ajanatah—who
does not know; utpatha—the wrong path;
pratipannasya—who has taken to;
parityagah—rejection; vidhiyate—is enjoined.

iti—thus; smaranat—from the smrti; tasya—his;
vaisnava-bhava—of the nature of a Vaisnava;
rahityena—by the absence; avaisnavataya—by the
quality of a nondevotee; "avaishnavopadistena"—in
the verse beginning with those words;
iti-adi-vacana—of this statement;
visayatvat—from the meaning; ca—also;
yatha—thus; ukta-laksanasya—with the qualities
stated; sri guror—of a spiritual master;

avidyamanatayam—in the absence; *tu*—however;
tasya—his; *eva*—indeed; *maha-bhagavatasya*—of
 an advanced devotee; *ekasya*—of one;
nitya-sevanam—regular service; *paramam*—the
 greatest; *sreyah*—good; *sah*—he; *ca*—also; *sri*
gurivat—like a spiritual master;
sama-vasanam—with the same intention or desire;
svasmin—toward oneself; *krpalu*—merciful;
cittah—mentality; *ca*—also; *grahyah*—to be
 accepted

yasya—of whom; *yat*—with whom;
sangatih—association; *pumsah*—of a person;

manivat—like a gem; *syat*—becomes;
tat-gunah—that same quality; *sva-kula*—of one's
 own community; *rdhaya*—for the success;
tatah—therefore; *dhiman*—a wise person;
sva-vuthyan—of those of one's own community;
eva—certainly; *samsrayet*—one must take shelter;

iti—thus; *sri hari-bhakti-sudhodaya*—of the book
 of the name; *drstyā*—according to the view;
krpam—mercy; *vina*—without; *tasmā*—toward
 him (the guru); *citta*—in one's heart; *aratya*—not
 having love.

APPENDIX

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS

Founder-Ācārya: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Center: _____

Date: _____

OFFICIAL RECOMMENDATION FOR FIRST INITIATION

To (Name of Guru): _____

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

It is my pleasure to recommend

for first initiation by you. I find that he/she has fulfilled the necessary qualifications for initiation to the best of my understanding. Specifically, for the last twelve months he/she has been engaged in favorable devotional service, has chanted sixteen rounds of japa daily, and has adhered to the four regulative principles. He/she is sufficiently knowledgeable in the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and the structure and purpose of ISKCON for initiation, as evidenced by passing an examination as prescribed under ISKCON Law. The candidate has accepted your shelter for at least six months. These qualifications have either been observed by me personally or I have heard of them from sources I know to be reliable.

Your servant,

Name

Title

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS

Founder-Ācārya: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Center: _____

Date _____

OFFICIAL RECOMMENDATION FOR SECOND INITIATION

To (Name of Guru): _____

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

It is my pleasure to recommend

for second initiation by you. I find that he/she has fulfilled the necessary qualifications for this initiation to the best of my understanding. Specifically, for the last twelve months he/she has been engaged in favorable devotional service, has chanted sixteen rounds of japa daily, and has adhered to the four regulative principles. It has been more than one year since he/she received first initiation. These qualifications have either been observed by me personally or I have heard of them from sources I know to be reliable.

Your servant,

Name

Title

Examination to Qualify for Taking Shelter of an Initiating Guru

1. What are the qualifications of a bona fide spiritual master?
2. Why are you convinced to follow the orders of the spiritual master in this life, and even life after life?
3. Why does one worship the spiritual master like God?
4. Do you believe the spiritual master speaks the absolute truth? If so, why?
5. Under what circumstances should the spiritual master be rejected?
6. What are the qualifications and responsibilities of a disciple?
7. What is the unique position of Śrīla Prabhupāda in ISKCON?
8. Why do you accept Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead?
9. Why do we follow the four regulative principles?
10. Why do we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa?
11. What is the position of the GBC Body?
12. Explain the difference between the body and the self.
13. What is ISKCON, and why should one remain in ISKCON?

